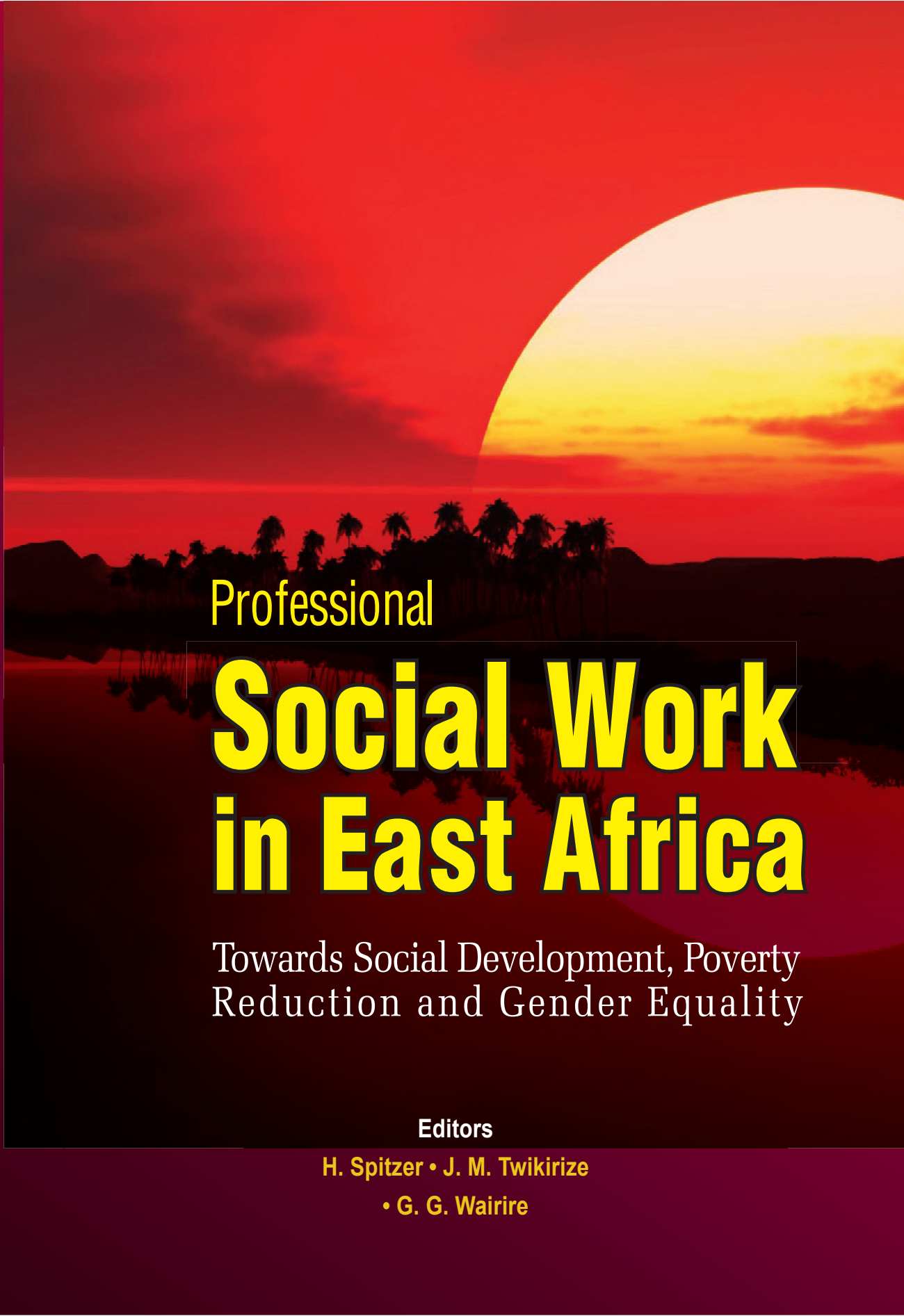




Professional

Social Work in East Africa

Towards Social Development, Poverty
Reduction and Gender Equality

Editors

H. Spitzer • J. M. Twikirize
• G. G. Wairire

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Professional Social Work in East Africa

Towards Social Development, Poverty
Reduction and Gender Equality

Edited by

Helmut Spitzer
Janestic M. Twikirize
Gidraph G. Wairire

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Professional Social Work in East Africa: A Foreword

The term 'social work' first emerged in Europe and North America at the end of the nineteenth century to connote the activities of 'friendly visitors' or 'charity workers' who sought to respond to the problems of poor people living in conditions of widespread deprivation in the rapidly expanding cities. The vast majority were educated, middle-class women who volunteered their time, but many wished to be recognised for their contribution, pursue a career in the field and be paid for the services. Since they were excluded from the well-established professions such as law, medicine, architecture and engineering, many advocated the creation of a new profession that would create satisfying career opportunities and professionalise what had previously been charitable activities. Emulating similar developments in nursing, teaching and librarianship, they campaigned for career recognition, paid employment, the creation of professional training schools, and the creation of professional associations that would represent their interests.

Social work educators were at the forefront of these developments. In partnership with practitioners and the emerging professional associations, they recognised that professional training and the development of a sound conceptual basis for practice was an essential step in achieving professional recognition. Since the first training schools were created, they have played a major role in shaping the development of social work as a profession. In addition to educating future practitioners, they have applied social science knowledge to formulate professional practice theories, undertaken extensive research into diverse aspects of the profession's activities, launched numerous journals and produced many academic books that facilitate the communication of ideas.

They have also been at the forefront of social work's internationalisation. Working with practitioners, social agencies and governments, they facilitated the introduction of professional social work in many countries. They persuaded universities to introduce social work training courses or otherwise campaigned for the creation of new tertiary educational institutions. They also played a major role in linking national and international developments. Through their publications, participation in international professional meetings, personal contacts and visits abroad, they contributed to the international spread of professional social work. The growth of social work in Africa, Asia and Central and South America owes much to the dedication and commitment of academic social workers. This is also the case in East Africa.

It is in this context that I am greatly honoured to write the foreword to this pioneering book on professional social work in East Africa. Although I was unable to participate in the discussions that took place during the international conference "Professional Social Work in East Africa" in Uganda in March 2014, it is gratifying to be included in the ongoing

efforts to promote social work in the region. Most of the participants at the conference and indeed, the contributors to this book, are social work educators who are playing a vital role in promoting professional training standards, working with non-profit organisations, governments and international donors to address pressing social needs and fostering a commitment to progressive social change. It is especially gratifying that colleagues from different countries have come together to debate issues of vital importance to the profession and to share a common vision for the future. As the book reveals, social work in East Africa, as in many other regions of the world, has made enormous progress in securing professional status which is important for the achievement of its overriding goal of promoting the well-being of the world's people.

However, the professionalisation of social work raises many issues which need to be addressed. Many of these are discussed in this book and while complex, the editors and contributors show how important they are and how they need to be properly debated. These include topics such as the role of social work in poverty reduction, the indigenisation of social work and the promotion of cross-cultural understanding, the need for an enhanced gender perspective in social work, the role of social work in social policy, political advocacy, and the best way of addressing challenges such as armed conflict, safe water supply, the needs of children, land distribution, and many others. In addition, several chapters deal with social work education in the region and trace its historical development as well as current features.

The book also raises the question of what social work's proper role and function should be in the context of East Africa's cultural, demographic, economic and political circumstances, and it is in this regard that it makes a particularly important international contribution. Its discussion of social work's wider role will be of interest to colleagues in other parts of the world as they debate the approaches that are most appropriate to the needs of their own societies. Of course, the question of social work's 'proper' role and function has been debated for many decades and there are still divergent views on this question. Nevertheless, scholars have identified three major functions which are widely referred to in the profession's literature. As it is well known, they include the remedial, preventive and change functions. Social work's remedial or problem-solving function involves the provision of services including counselling and material assistance to help those in need and to restore them to normal living. Social work's preventive function is, as the term suggests, designed to prevent problems from occurring. Finally, social work's social change or developmental function is concerned with promoting people's well-being by addressing the wider social conditions that impede progress and bringing about positive improvements in standards of living and democratic participation. This latter function is sometimes referred to as social work's transformative function since it seeks to radically alter existing oppressive conditions that prevent people from realising their potential.

These three functions are conventionally associated with different types of social work practice. The remedial function is related to direct casework practice or clinical social work as it is now commonly known, while social work's preventive function is often linked to youth and community work. The profession's social change function is usually associated

with radical or activist social work, community practice, political lobbying and social development. However, it should be recognised that this is a simplistic classification which artificially divides functions among different types of practice when in fact social work's different functions can be promoted through all forms of practice. For example, many caseworkers who are primarily engaged in remedial practice also seek to promote change at the individual level and increasingly, many are involved in activities that promote economic and social development. Similarly, change is not only the prerogative of community-based organisations but of committed individual social workers who engage in the political process to support progressive causes.

The chapters in this book show that social workers in East Africa are also debating which functions are most relevant to the region's needs. Generally, they reveal a preference for a social change or developmental function and many advocate the adoption of developmental forms of social work. However, as the editors point out in the book's concluding chapter, it is important that a commitment to developmental social work does not preclude a concern for those with serious personal and family problems which require remedial interventions. I concur and, as mentioned earlier, believe that the different types of social work practice are able to encompass multiple functions. In particular, I believe that social work's developmental function can be achieved through direct practice as well as through group and community work and of course through activism. A good deal of case material from Africa and elsewhere is now available to show that direct practitioners increasingly engage in developmental activities that not only address social problems but raise incomes in standards of living. However, social workers still disagree sharply about which function represents social work's 'true' and 'authentic' role. Clearly, much more needs to be done to promote an integrated approach that harmonises social work's different functions.

It is also important that debates about social work's functions be rooted in a realistic assessment of what social workers actually do and are able to do. The vast majority of social workers around the world are engaged in remedial practice and work for agencies that seek to respond to social problems. While academics frequently exhort the profession to embrace innovative forms of practice that transcend its conventional commitments, these need to be rooted in a pragmatic assessment of what is possible. In addition, ways of achieving broader goals such as promoting peace, environmental sustainability, gender inequality and the redistribution of income and wealth need to be articulated. It is in this regard that the editors of the book helpfully urge social workers to form coalitions with social movements, grassroots organisations and international non-profits that are committed to these wider goals. Another relevant issue is developing closer links with paraprofessionals working in community and social development. There is a danger that the emphasis on professionalisation neglects the important role that these workers play. Many of the goals that social workers aspire to achieve can be realised by more closely collaborating with these paraprofessionals.

Much more needs to be done to promote an activist style of engagement in the profession. While social work educators frequently exhort their students to participate in

political activities that bring about progressive social change, most will find employment in non-profit and government agencies that do not prioritise lobbying and activism. Of course, individual social workers should be politically aware and participate in the electoral process but it is more likely that they will be mobilised through strong professional associations that, in addition to promoting the profession's interests, actively campaign to bring about change. Unfortunately, many countries do not have any professional associations and in many others, they are poorly organised and exercise little influence. Even in countries where professional associations have a sizeable membership, their political role leaves much to be desired. Promoting the professionalisation of social work should not only focus on curricula and educational standards and deciding which functions are most suitable for professional practice but on creating and strengthening professional associations that can exert influence in the political arena. Although social work does not have the sway of professions such as law or medicine, it has the ability to campaign for a just allocation of resources and enhanced democratic decision-making. Through lobbying and networking, it can also influence those in power. Better still, social workers should be encouraged to stand in elections and secure political office. Many have the skill and motivation to engage in the political process at the local and national level and indeed in some countries, they have actually been elected to office. At the time of writing, one of our Berkeley social work graduates plays a leading role in progressive politics in the Congress of the United States.

Allow me to say again how honoured I am to be invited to write this foreword and add my own thoughts to the many important issues raised in this book. The book is not only relevant to social workers in East Africa but to colleagues all over the world who will benefit from its incisive commentary on various critical concerns. By addressing issues that are directly relevant to current international debates such as the definition of social work, the global standards for social work education and the more recent initiative on the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development, it will contribute to social work's continued commitment to achieve international recognition. The editors and contributors are to be congratulated on what is a landmark achievement.

James Midgley

Harry & Riva Specht Professor of Public Social Services
University of California, Berkeley

Preface: Trans-cultural Spaces of Knowledge

The fourteenth of March, 2014 was a particularly hot day in the Ugandan metropolis Kampala. That day, over 400 people marched through the streets of the city, headed by the multitudinous local police orchestra. This frolic march was the prelude to an extraordinary conference on 'Promotion of Professional Social Work in East Africa' and its professional establishment at African universities. The event was organised by the team of the APPEAR (Austrian Partnership Programme in Higher Education & Research for Development) project PROSOWO – 'Promotion of Professional Social Work towards Social Development and Poverty Reduction in East Africa'.

While the band played in the front and banners with slogans such as 'Knowledge for a Fair World' were held up in the back, Dr Zena Mabeyo, project coordinator of the Institute of Social Work in Tanzania, observed:

It is very impressive – four African and one Austrian higher education institution for social work have initiated this with the support of the APPEAR programme. More than 400 delegates are coming to the conference – from all continents, the majority of them from East African countries. We have here many people from Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and even Somalia ... they only decided to take part at a very late stage, it is great that they are here!

The PROSOWO project exemplarily unites empirical research with social commitment and curriculum development for higher education institutions in five East African countries. The march through Kampala was a strong signal of the importance of social work in East African contexts and its relevance to social and development policy. Social work's commitment to fight poverty, achieve the Millennium Development Goals and uphold fundamental human rights was widely discussed during the conference by delegates representing 40 countries and 70 universities. The delegates included social work educators, practitioners, students, researchers, policy makers and those who are supposed to ultimately benefit from social work services, namely clients.

Like all other projects of the Higher Education Cooperation Programme of APPEAR, this project is integrated in the immediate social reality: The PROSOWO project emphasises research and reflection, and incorporates the results of the academic discourses in the development of the curricula of the higher education institutions.

Dr Janestic Twikirize, the Ugandan project coordinator at Makerere University and co-editor of this book, described the cooperation with Carinthia University of Applied Sciences and four other East African universities in the following way:

We conducted a mega study about the importance of social work, the first study of this kind in East Africa ... We asked close to 2,000 people in four partner countries: social workers, trainers, clients, politicians ... The aim of the research was to find out and document what social work really can contribute to poverty reduction; what social work accomplishes;

what the big challenges of the future are, especially also with a view to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

PROSOWO is one of 17 academic partnerships located in 13 countries in the framework of the 'Austrian Partnership Programme in Higher Education & Research for Development', which is financed by the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC). More than four years ago, the new Higher Education Cooperation Programme, called APPEAR, started as an experiment. At the time, there was by no means any certainty whether or not and in which way the Austrian scientific community and the Austrian higher education institutions would be interested in an unconventional cooperation programme with tertiary education institutions in the priority countries of the Austrian Development Cooperation in the South. With a total of 109 applications for academic partnerships and 124 for preparatory funding, the response was overwhelming. It shows how great the interest in Austria is in science, research and teaching for development and also that there is a great willingness on the part of the scientific community to deal with participatory knowledge production in non-European contexts. What was particularly gratifying was the broad spectrum of applications. Therein, a variety of disciplines, research questions and institutions from Austria and our partner countries became evident.

APPEAR has created varied spaces of trans-cultural knowledge production. The generated knowledge is used in teaching at higher education institutions, in research and also in institutional management. In this context, the programme follows the basic development policy principles, including gender sensitivity, contribution to poverty reduction, participatory project planning and project implementation, and coherence with regional and national development plans. The central motive corresponds to a shift in paradigms in academic cooperation between an industrial country and economically poor countries of the South. *APPEAR is not interested in one-sided knowledge transfer!* This is the superordinate slogan for the era of paternalistic dominance: *We have got the solution, what is your problem?* This approach, as well as the associated scientific arrogance of the "West" towards the multifaceted worlds of knowledge of non-European cultures, now belongs to the past.

APPEAR focuses on joint researching, learning, teaching and implementing structural improvements in tertiary education institutions with a view to attaining development policy goals. APPEAR attaches great value to the fact that the fundamental research questions should be developed in collaboration with the partners and that the dissemination and exploitation of research results should follow the principles of partnership. This is why APPEAR invites educational institutions from the South to take on full responsibility, including financial responsibility, for the project. The approach is based on an open and participatory concept which is put into practice only in few comparable European programmes. It allows for an equal partnership with regards to project organisation, logistics and implementation.

This way, the aim of capacity development can be served in the best possible way along with research and teaching for development. In addition to the academic partnerships, APPEAR offers scholarships for Master's and doctoral students at universities in Austria.

Applications should preferably be within the framework of ongoing projects. In the first phase of the programme (2011-2014), 63 out of 156 applications received awards. The scholarship programme enhances capacity development and contributes to sustainable institutional cooperation beyond the project term. For the Austrian researchers, APPEAR constitutes an essential broadening of their academic horizon. Their collaborative scientific work in different cultural, and partly epistemological contexts, increases openness, flexibility and creativity in dealing with their own research disciplines.

In the framework of the PROSOWO project, the three doctoral candidates who are educated in both Austria and in East Africa have opened new spaces for trans-cultural knowledge by means of common research, discourses and experiences. Dr Zena Mabeyo from Tanzania explained this learning experience as follows:

The fascinating thing for me was the experience of getting to know other departments for social work and establishing contacts. Before the PROSOWO project, we had no contacts, no cooperation. Some of our colleagues had never been to another African country before ... I, too, travelled to Rwanda for the first time. Through the project, the East African lecturers in social work came together and thus it was possible to initiate this conference which is a truly historic one for us and for Africa: Half of the world came together here and we have learnt from each other!

For me as APPEAR's programme leader, the PROSOWO project constitutes a best practice example of transdisciplinary and trans-cultural cooperation. Not only have the wide varieties of scientific questions raised in this book contributed to the success of the project, but also the numerous positive interpersonal experiences and the learning processes involved.

Besides, PROSOWO did not hesitate to communicate the project work and its results openly to the public. In this way an important claim of APPEAR was fulfilled. It is important for APPEAR to make development research and the creation of common worlds of knowledge available, not only to the scientific communities, but also to the broad public. This is why APPEAR organises project presentations, film days, round table discussions, its own film festival in Vienna; maintains its own radio broadcasting series at the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation; endeavours to get information published in print media; and also finances the publication of books like this one. PROSOWO has always been actively involved in public relations activities, and this book is another step towards introducing the important discourses which are necessary for the improvement of the social situation in East Africa to interested readers and stakeholders, including social workers, politicians, social scientists, teachers, staff of NGOs and ministries. On this note, I wish to truly congratulate the PROSOWO team on the success of the project. I am sure that the transnational scientific cooperation and partnerships initiated by PROSOWO will continue in the future.

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We also thank the Carinthian provincial government and the small but powerful non-governmental organisation AfriCarinthia for their valuable financial support of specific project activities which would otherwise not have been possible to achieve.

The book would not be a reality without the input of all the authors whose contributions reflect immense scholarship about social work in Africa. You have made an indelible mark in producing the first book ever about social work in East Africa. We are indebted to you for your great thoughts and ideas which we believe will greatly contribute to a sound body of knowledge on social work in East Africa.

We cannot forget the noble efforts of Professor Antoinette Lombard from the University of Pretoria, South Africa, who not only walked the path with the PROSOWO project right from its conception but also served as the peer-reviewer for the book. Her critical comments with a great scholarly lens and diligence have not only mentored and boosted social work scholarship in East Africa but also ensured quality in the final product for which we are grateful.

We also thank Professor Rodreck Mupedziswa from the University of Botswana who peer-reviewed one book chapter.

Special thanks go to the team members in the partner countries who persistently worked hard to ensure the success of the research component of the PROSOWO project which, in turn, greatly informed the central focus of this book. These include: Dr Narathius Asingwire, Ms Agatha Kafuko, Dr Rosalind Lubanga and Dr Julius Omona from Makerere University; Senator Dr Agnes Zani, Dr Mumbi Machera and the late Dr Pius Mutie from the University of Nairobi; Mr Charles Rutikanga and Mr Charles Kalinganire from the University of Rwanda; Dr Zena Mnasi Mabeyo from the Institute of Social Work, Tanzania,

and Ms Sabrina Riedl from the Carinthia University of Applied Sciences, Austria. We are grateful for their immense contribution in the research design and the formulation of research tools. We also express our gratitude to all research assistants in the respective partner countries who assisted in the data collection process.

Without the many respondents in the four partner countries, including social work practitioners, educators, students, clients, employers and policy makers who provided the data for this research, the book would not have yielded its current shape, hence our profound appreciation to them all. Last but not least, we are thankful to our publisher, Fountain Publishers in Uganda for the design, layout and associated tasks in the publication process of this book.

Since the inception of the PROSOWO project in the year 2010, social work in East Africa has undergone tremendous developments in terms of research, education, practice, policy and capacity-building.

To you all who contributed to this development, *asanteni sana!*

July 2014, Feldkirchen, Kampala, Nairobi

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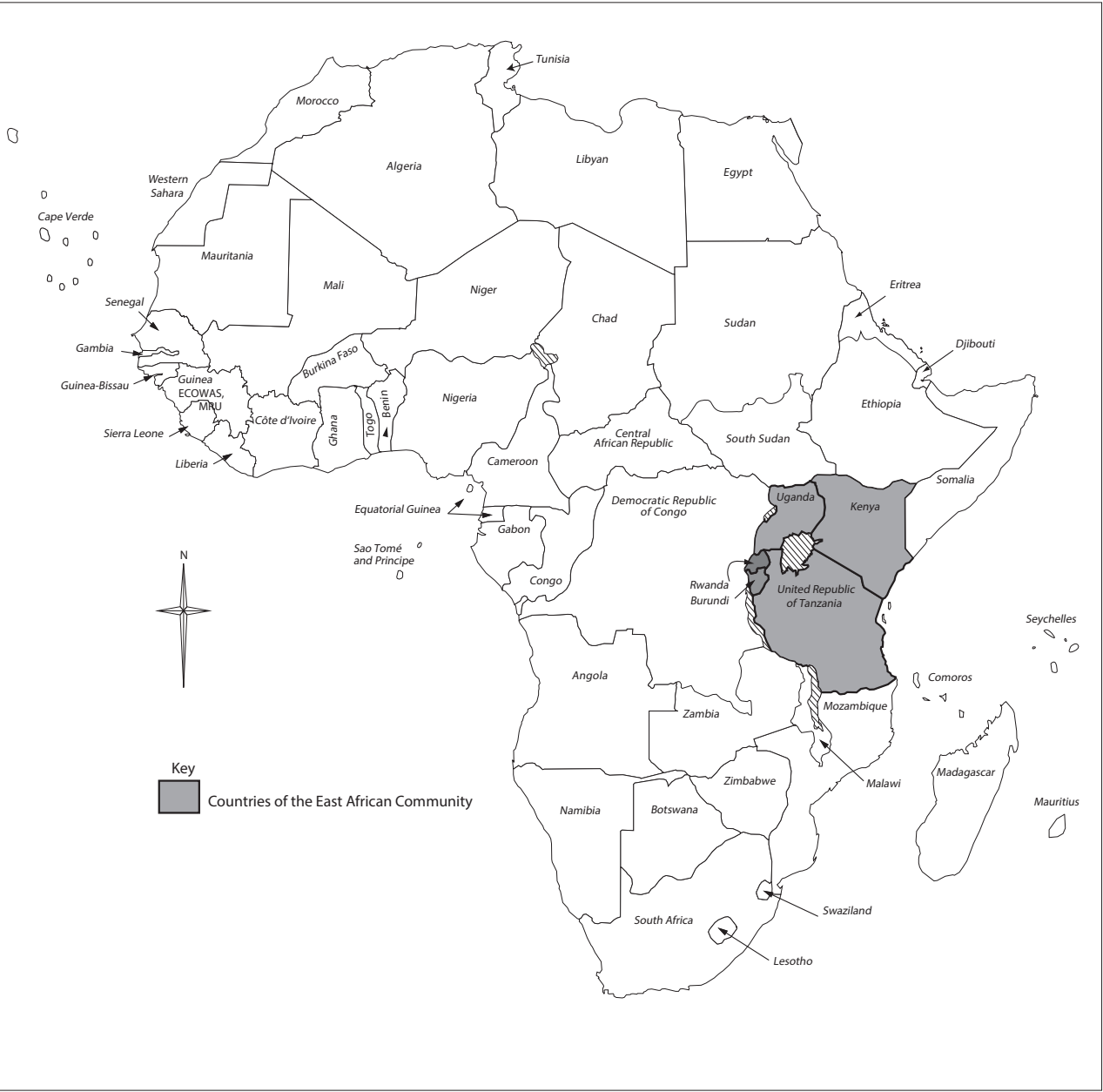
one of top thirty researchers at UKZN, and was selected, by the Ministry of Science and Technology, as the 2013 Runner-Up for the Distinguished Women in Science Award (Humanities and Social Sciences) for “her outstanding contribution to building South Africa’s scientific and research knowledge base”.

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Map of Africa Showing East African Countries



PROSOWO: A Project to Professionalise Social Work in East Africa

Helmut Spitzer and Janestic M. Twikirize

Introduction

In this chapter, we refer to a multi-dimensional project which served as the umbrella for this publication. The project, which ran over three and a half years, was jointly undertaken by five higher education institutions to promote social work in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, linking empirical research with social work education, practice and policy. One of the key academic outcomes of the project is this book. In this introductory chapter, we provide background information about the project and link its objectives and activities to social work realities in East Africa. We also outline the scope of this book.

The starting point: A social work gathering in Nairobi

In July 2010, a team of social work academics from Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa and Austria met in Nairobi for a week-long workshop with a joint ambition: to conceptualise a framework for the promotion of professional social work in the East African region.¹ In spite of the critical role that social work has to play in social development and the enhancement of human welfare, the profession has remained largely under-developed and under-recognised in East Africa. Anecdotal evidence at the time showed that both the education and practice of social work in the region were still very dependent on theories, models and concepts imported from Western countries. Due to limited local social work research and publications, not much context-specific knowledge and practice models had been generated in the field of social work in East Africa. Furthermore, due to lack of legislation for the regulation of professional social work, there has been a proliferation of non-social workers practising and even teaching social work. All these tended to diminish the recognition of the contribution of social work to social development and poverty reduction in the region. The team shared a conviction that for social work to effectively contribute towards social development, it needed to be strengthened at training, practice

¹ This meeting was sponsored by the Austrian Partnership Programme in Higher Education and Research for Development (APPEAR) as preparatory funding. Participants were from the University of Nairobi, Kenya; University of Rwanda; Institute of Social Work, Tanzania; Makerere University, Uganda; University of Pretoria, South Africa; and Carinthia University of Applied Sciences, Austria.

and policy levels. This conviction served as the motivation and guide over the three and a half years period.

The outcome of this meeting was a proposal which was subsequently submitted to the Austrian Partnership Programme in Higher Education and Research for Development (APPEAR). APPEAR is the implementing organisation of a programme of the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) for the promotion of academic partnerships between higher education institutions in Austria and partner countries in the Global South. Under the superordinate goal of poverty reduction, the specific objectives of the APPEAR programme are, *inter alia*: to improve the quality of teaching and research; to make the management and the administration of partner institutions more effective; and to strengthen the scientific dialogue nationally and internationally (www.appear.at). These objectives are in line with the Austrian Development Cooperation's 'Strategy on Higher Education and Scientific Cooperation' (ADA, 2009) and with a general development policy trend in Europe (European University Association, 2010). Such programmes for international cooperation in higher education and research are based on key policy documents in international development cooperation, namely the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (OECD, 2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (OECD, 2008). Their particular aim is capacity-building of tertiary education institutions in the Southern partner countries (Boeren, 2013). The idea behind such programmes corresponds with the call for African universities to strengthen the role of the scientific community in economic and social development. As has been put by Juma (2006, xii):

The continent needs a new generation of universities that can serve as engines of both community development and social renewal, [hence] international support should (...) go to strengthen the capacity of institutions of higher learning to solve local problems. (ibid., vii)

The international team of social work educators left Nairobi after a week of day-and-night work with a conceptual framework that was designed to promote social work through a set of interlinked activities, namely: empirical research; curriculum review and development; institutional and academic capacity-building; and political advocacy for the social work profession in the East African Community (with a focus on Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda²). After some months of trembling uncertainty, as is usually the case when submitting a project idea to a potential donor, the proposal finally turned out to be successful. This was the starting point of an international project called PROSOWO, an acronym which stands for 'Promotion of Professional Social Work towards Social Development and Poverty Reduction in East Africa' (see www.appear.at/prosowo; also Twikirize *et al.*, 2013).

² A partner institution from Burundi (Hope Africa University) joined the project during a regional social work workshop held in Nairobi, Kenya on 27th February, 2013.

Objectives, activities and milestones of the PROSOWO project

Objectives

The overall goal of the PROSOWO project was to ‘promote professional social work education and practice to more effectively contribute towards social development and poverty reduction in achieving the Millennium Development Goals in East Africa’. The team shared a joint vision that social work ought to be a significant partner, alongside other stakeholders, in the overall development process in the countries of the East African Community. In this region, social work is confronted with particular challenges and social problems which are significantly different from contexts like Europe or North America. Despite certain differences, it can be stated that all countries in East Africa face similar problems in terms of widespread poverty; poor socioeconomic achievements; lack of infrastructure; environmental problems; rapid social change and high rural-urban drift; gender inequality; the devastating effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on entire communities; and poor social protection services, especially for vulnerable groups such as children, women, people with disabilities and the aged. In addition, the region has been affected by armed conflict (Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda); genocide (Rwanda); ethnic clashes coupled with political violence (Burundi, Rwanda, Kenya); and high numbers of refugees (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania) and internally displaced people (Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda). All these factors point at crucial connecting factors to social work and the corresponding academic institutions that provide related training and research. Hence, a shared vision for a strong social work profession became paramount in the project’s approach.

The specific objectives of the PROSOWO project were:

- To strengthen the capacity of higher social work education institutions in the region through research, curriculum development and joint publications;
- To develop sustainable academic partnerships and networks in social work training and research in Africa and internationally;
- To conduct research on the role of social work in poverty reduction towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals;
- To develop more relevant social work curricula in alignment with national poverty reduction plans and social development strategies;
- To facilitate the process of drafting discussion papers on regulating the social work profession for discussions with relevant government authorities; and
- To share outcomes of the project with the international social work academia and development stakeholders through the means of publications, symposia and conferences.

Activities

To achieve these objectives, a series of intertwined activities were undertaken. In the first year, a comprehensive empirical field research on the role of social work in poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was conducted in the four East African countries. The research comprised of a set of questionnaires (for

social work practitioners, educators, students and employers), qualitative interviews (with key policy decision makers, social work educators and employers) and a range of focus group discussions with social work clients at grassroots level. In total, the study involved 2,000 respondents.³ The conceptual and methodological framework and the key empirical findings of the research can be found in Part III of this book. As a next step, the research findings were translated into revised social work curricula at bachelor's degree level and serve as a guideline for newly developed training programmes at master's degree level. At the time of writing this book, this was still an ongoing process at the participating institutions. The main purpose of revised curricula is to produce more competent social work practitioners, capable of contributing effectively to the socioeconomic development of their respective countries. Thus, the future generation of social workers should be more adequately prepared to handle the multiple challenges of poverty and related social problems in the region. Key elements in the link between research, education and practice are culture-specific social work methods, a social development approach and gender equality.

From the initial stage of the PROSOWO project, a developmental perspective in social work theory, education and practice served as a basis and framework for planning and implementing the various project activities (see Mupedziswa, 2001; Hochfeld *et al.*, 2009; Midgley, 2010). The project also entailed activities aimed at strengthening the role of social work at a policy level. A series of workshops and meetings were held to sensitise government officials and political decision makers on the crucial role social work has to play in the conceptualisation and implementation of social policy and social development strategies and programmes. As has been stated by Sewpaul (2006), social workers need to engage in policy-making processes and with policies in the making, and advocate structural changes with regard to poverty, oppression and exclusion. In order to be able to play such a role, social work must be empowered and regulated through a legislative framework. Although it was not possible to fully achieve this goal within the project period, initial steps have been taken in the four countries to prepare the ground for the regulation of social work. To take Tanzania as an example, deliberations towards the development of a Social Work Council and Bill are already in progress (Mabeyo, 2013).

It must be stressed that the overall PROSOWO idea emerged against the background that social work is not widely recognised in East Africa, yet the profession has an important role to play in light of a growing demand for social services, the changing development scenarios and prevalent poverty in the region. Training opportunities at university level are still inadequate. Social work in these countries is an under-represented and under-recognised profession. Very little has been done in the past to professionalise, indigenise and promote social work so that it can play a major role in social development and poverty reduction. PROSOWO has contributed to bridging these gaps.

³ Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from study respondents in this book refer to the period of August to December 2011 when the PROSOWO research was conducted.

Milestones

In line with the above mentioned objectives and activities, PROSOWO has marked a milestone for social work in different ways. First, it was the first time ever that a social work project received a grant through the Austrian Development Assistance and subsequently gained recognition for its potential to play a significant role in international development cooperation and in the fight against poverty – not just at a micro level but also in a broader sociopolitical context. As has been rightly put by Herscovitch and Healy (2008), there is significant cross-over between social work and the domain of international relief and development practice, both in terms of principles as well as implementation methodologies. Social work professionals hold many and diverse roles within international NGOs working in this field.

Second, the project was seen as a unique opportunity by the East African partners to conduct basic research on the role of social work in alignment with national poverty reduction plans and social development strategies in their respective countries. Prior to this project, to the best of our knowledge, there had never been a research of this nature in the region. The project has laid a strong foundation for more social work research to inform policies on poverty reduction, social work education and concrete areas of social work involvement for social development in East Africa.

Third, PROSOWO also provided a base for institutional capacity-building of social work in the respective universities. At the time when PROSOWO started, social work was greatly marginalised in most higher education institutions in the region. The respective schools of social work were under-resourced in terms of personnel, infrastructure and academic capacities. Some did not even have a department on its own but were rather subsidiarily located under the umbrella of sociology (as is the case at the University of Nairobi) or as a *Social Work Option* in sociology (as is the case at the University of Rwanda). Besides, a major drawback for professional social work education and practice resulted from a huge lack of a thorough knowledge base, research data and well-documented social work practice models that could meaningfully contribute to poverty reduction and social development. PROSOWO was, therefore, conceptualised as a strategy that would contribute in the efforts to bridge this gap.

Fourth, PROSOWO's conceptual framework had a strong component on regional and international networking – in East Africa, across the continent and beyond. Right from the beginning, it was the intention of the PROSOWO team to closely collaborate with both the Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa (ASSWA) as well as the respective national social workers' associations in the region. It was envisaged that concerted efforts to promote social work beyond national boundaries would contribute to the recognition of the profession at the respective government levels in order to facilitate the process of developing proper legal regulations for the profession. Equally, international exchange and networking were regarded as immensely relevant in the updates of recent social work discourses in the region. Consequently, the project served as an ideal base to learn from each other. In the process of the three and a half years of the project, the team members were able to conduct study visits and workshops as well as to attend and launch international

symposia and conferences in the countries of the East African Community (including Burundi), in Europe (Austria and Sweden) and South Africa.

Fifth, the project provided avenues for joint publications in international journals and presentations at international conferences. The PROSOWO team attended three workshops on academic writing (in Austria, Sweden and Uganda) to enhance their scientific writing skills. These activities contributed to establishing self-confident identities as social work researchers and scholars amongst the team members and their respective colleagues who participated in the project. Mwansa and Kreitzer (2012, 403) stress that:

Research and writing play a key role in encouraging African academics and practitioners to discuss and incorporate African perspectives in teaching and practice and to continue the lively debate about what is 'African culture'. There is a continual lack of textbooks written by Africans with case studies that are about Africa.

As a key outcome of the PROSOWO project, four national research reports were published as books (Twikirize *et al.*, 2013; Kalinganire and Rutikanga, 2014; Mabeyo, Ndung'u and Riedl, 2014; Wairire *et al.*, 2014) and will now serve as key reference material for social work studies in the region.

Another major milestone of the PROSOWO project was the launch of an international social work conference in Kampala in March 2014, coinciding with World Social Work Day 2014.⁴ At this conference, more than 400 delegates from Africa and beyond had an opportunity to interact and network with each other. As part of the conference, delegates participated in a march on the streets of Kampala, thus raising their voice for social justice and increasing the profile and public recognition of social work.⁵ The conference showed social workers from the region that their profession is part of an international community with a strong common background and a joint vision for a more just society.

Last but not least, this book is another major outcome of the PROSOWO project. It is ground-breaking in the sense that it is the first comprehensive text on social work in East Africa, largely written by academics and authors from the region. It thus contributes to the process of incorporating local knowledge and practice into the scientific body of social work literature.

The scope of this book

This book comprises theoretical aspects of social work, social development, poverty reduction and gender equality, and it also covers key empirical findings derived from the PROSOWO project. In the following section, we provide a brief overview of the articles in this book. In so doing, we follow the five thematic headings of the book structure.

⁴ The international conference on "Professional Social Work in East Africa: Towards Social Development and Poverty Reduction in East Africa" was held in Kampala, Uganda, from 16th to 18th March, 2014 (see http://www.appear.at/appear_infos/project_portfolio/academic_partnerships/prosowo_project26_prep13/conference_prosowo/).

⁵ A summary of the social work march and the conference can be watched at Youtube; see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYO0ERAV8-Y>.

Theoretical perspectives and reflections

In the first article, Helmut Spitzer deliberates on '*Social Work in African Contexts: A Cross-cultural Reflection on Theory and Practice*'. The author traces the history of social work in Africa and its interconnectedness with the international development of the profession. He highlights the struggle for 'indigenous' social work concepts and methods that provide meaningful responses to the social problems on the continent. He also advocates a strong social work profession rooted in African social and cultural values and perspectives and international cooperation that is based on principles of "horizontal dialogue".

Vishanthie Sewpaul, in '*Social Work and Poverty Reduction in Africa: The Indelible Reality*', exposes the complexity of multiple and vexing realities that largely constitute poverty in Africa. She adopts a definition of poverty that refutes only the conventional economic approach and supports an approach rooted in human rights, social justice and a focus on human capabilities. The role of social work in poverty alleviation is addressed, with emphasis on the need to confront and challenge structural sources of poverty and inequality.

In her article '*A Developmental Perspective in Social Work Theory and Practice*', Antoinette Lombard presents a strong case for social work to return to its social change function and engage in advocacy practice and challenge structural and power issues on a macro level in order to decisively tackle poverty and inequality.

Janestic M. Twikirize, in '*Gender Perspectives in Poverty Reduction and Social Development*', expounds gender issues as integral to social development, and highlights the progress and gaps in the pursuit of gender equality in East Africa, urging for a more proactive role by social workers in promoting gender equality in the region.

In the subsequent chapter on '*Indigenisation of Social Work in Africa: Debates, Prospects and Challenges*', Janestic M. Twikirize returns with an examination of the rationale for indigenisation of social work in Africa and, drawing on empirical findings, illustrates the extent of indigenisation of social work education and practice in East Africa.

The origin and status of social work in East Africa

In view of the fact that there is very little documentation on the evolution of social work in East Africa, Part II of this book attempts to provide a systematic account of the history and development of social work in the following countries: Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi and Ethiopia. Whilst most articles have a common thread, tracing social work in the respective countries to external factors such as colonisation, there are some features that are unique to each country. In his article, '*The State of Social Work Education and Practice in Kenya*', Gidraph G. Wairire examines sociocultural and economic scenarios in Kenya and how they influence social work. He also provides a historical perspective and discusses current challenges for professional social work.

The next article on '*The Status of Social Work Education and Practice in Rwanda*' refers to a particular challenging context. Charles Kalinganire and Charles Rutikanga explain how social work was introduced in Rwanda in the aftermath of the genocide to respond to the psycho-social and economic needs of the population.

Zena M. Mabeyo discusses *'The Development of Social Work Education and Practice in Tanzania'*, stressing the profession's historical residual character and how this has persisted in education and practice. The author also refers to recent transformative steps to professionalise social work in this country.

Janestic M. Twikirize provides an account of *'Social Work Education and Practice in Uganda: A Historical Perspective'* and outlines current challenges and prospects for social work.

Helmut Spitzer, Jacqueline Murekasenge and Susan Muchiri refer to Burundi as the single country in the East African Community which was not an official partner of the PROSOWO project. The authors reflect on *'Social Work in Burundi's Post-conflict Society'* and the current challenges of an emerging profession under extremely difficult circumstances.

The final chapter in this part of the book comes from Wassie Kebede. In *'Social Work Education in Ethiopia: Celebrating the Rebirth of the Profession'*, Kebede provides a systematic account of the rise, fall and "rebirth" of social work – bringing out the extraordinary measures that were taken to reinvent the profession in the country.

The role of social work in poverty reduction: Empirical findings

Part III is mainly based on empirical findings of the PROSOWO study on the role of social work in poverty reduction and the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals in East Africa.

In *'Breaking New Grounds: Conceptual and Methodological Framework of a Regional Research Project'*, Helmut Spitzer and Janestic M. Twikirize provide the scientific base for this regional research project. Key thematic concepts of poverty reduction, Millennium Development Goals, social development, gender equality, cultural relevance and professional social work are expounded.

In the subsequent chapter, *'Professional Social Work in East Africa: Empirical Evidence'*, Janestic M. Twikirize, Helmut Spitzer, Gidraph G. Wairire, Zena M. Mabeyo and Charles Rutikanga provide a comprehensive discussion of social work in East Africa, based on the aforementioned study. The article adopts a comparative approach – bringing out the commonalities and differences in social work practice roles, methods and approaches in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda.

The four subsequent chapters focus on social work in the specific countries and present some of the national empirical findings.

Gidraph G. Wairire and Christopher N. Kiboro present *'Social Work Perspectives in Poverty Reduction and Social Development in Kenya'* with a particular focus on poverty reduction programmes and the MDGs.

Charles Kalinganire and Charles Rutikanga identify *'Social Development as the Privileged Model for Social Work Practice in Post-genocide Rwanda'* and discuss related current challenges.

The next article comes from Tanzania. Zena M. Mabeyo argues towards *'Redefining the Role of Social Work in the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and Social Development in Tanzania'*. In Mabeyo's view, this re-definition of the role of social work

from remedial to developmental is essential if the profession is to remain relevant and contribute meaningfully towards a prosperous future in the country.

Still drawing on findings of the PROSOWO study, Narathius Asingwire and Janestic M. Twikirize, in *'Contemporary Social Work in Uganda: Towards Poverty Reduction and Social Development'*, argue that social work is making a significant contribution to social development through interventions in education, health, gender equality, environmental protection, research and building of global partnerships. The authors take the view that addressing poverty and promoting social development entails building on the capacities, experiences and potentials of those served by social workers; and on recognising their views and respecting their priorities.

Social policy, gender and conflict: The role of social work

The fourth part of this publication focuses on case examples from different thematic areas including social policy, gender, education and conflict. The role of social work in these areas is interrogated, based on different contexts and perspectives.

Jeannette Bayisenge, in *'Land Issues in Rwanda: Gender Perspectives and Social Work Implications'*, explores gender aspects of land rights in Rwanda, focusing on the effect of the ongoing Land Tenure Reform on women and what role social workers could play in this process.

Using the example of rural water delivery in Uganda, Narathius Asingwire, in *'Interrogating the Role of Social Work in Social Policy Reforms in Uganda: A Case of Demand-driven Approach for Rural Safe Water Delivery'*, argues that social workers have pivotal roles to play in influencing policy reforms, including being a voice for the voiceless so as to realise enhanced social welfare of the rural poor.

Eddy J. Walakira, Ismael Ddumba-Nyanzi and Badru Bukenya discuss *'NGOs and Child-sensitive Social Protection Programming in Uganda'* and underscore the contribution that social work should make towards ensuring social protection for vulnerable groups.

In *'Integrating Social Work Services into Schools: A Case for School Social Work in Uganda'*, Ronald Luwangula and Sabrina Riedl present the findings of a qualitative study on the living environments of school-going children in Uganda and their impact on educational success and dropout rates. Furthermore, the article pursues visionary territory in the search of a culturally and contextually relevant form of community-based school social work.

The next two chapters focus on social work in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Julius Omona examines *'Social Work in a Post-war Setting: Culture and Gender Dimensions during the Recovery and Development of the Acholi Sub-region in Northern Uganda'*. He argues that gender and cultural issues are very sensitive in post-conflict societies and pose a major challenge for social workers during the period of reconstruction and recovery.

To extend the discussion, Helmut Spitzer and Janestic M. Twikirize explore the role of social work with regard to the urging demands and complex challenges of conflict, post-conflict and post-genocide situations. In their article *'Armed Conflict and Political Violence in Africa's Great Lakes Region: Challenges for Social Work Education and Practice'*,

the authors introduce a comprehensive conceptual framework for social work in conflict and post-conflict situations.

The way forward

In the concluding chapter, Helmut Spitzer and Janestic M. Twikirize capture the key thematic issues of this book and provide 'A Vision for Social Work in East Africa'. The authors highlight a social development perspective in social work theory, education and practice, and outline future areas for social work interventions. They argue that social work should and will play a more prominent role in policy-making in the East African Community and beyond, thus contributing more effectively to the welfare of the population and towards social development, poverty reduction and gender equality.

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Social Work in African Contexts: A Cross-cultural Reflection on Theory and Practice

Helmut Spitzer

Introduction

The historical development and current situation of social work in African contexts is deeply linked to the international emergence of the profession and to the long-lasting implications of imperialism, colonialism and well-meant development efforts on the part of the West. Colonialism and its concomitant mechanisms of modernisation in the post-colonial period have had a huge impact on the way social work is conceptualised in Africa today. Economic systems, administrative structures, educational and other social institutions were permeated by colonial rule and survived after independence as did the structures of rudimentary social welfare services based on Western models. Moreover, colonialism fostered a deeply rooted belief that Western ideas and concepts were superior and worthy of emulation (Midgley, 1981). As will be seen in this article, social work in Africa, albeit confronted with a myriad of challenges, has unique characteristics and specific ways of dealing with social problems which are sometimes very different from how social work is seen in the contexts of industrialised societies. One feature of social work in African countries is its struggle for appropriateness: to overcome the legacy of imported, Western-based models of intervention which are too often unsuitable with regard to the distinctiveness and complexity of African cultures. In literature, this struggle has become popular as the challenge towards the 'indigenisation' of social work (Osei-Hwedie, 1993). The second feature is the endeavour for effectiveness: to search for new grounds of social work education and practice that provide meaningful responses to the needs of the people living at grassroots level. This search has been characterised as "the quest for relevance" by Mupedziswa (2001), thus referring to the need to adopt a developmental approach in social work in order to address the socioeconomic realities and corresponding challenges in African societies.

A word of caution is necessary here: It is impossible to write about social work in Africa in general terms since the name 'Africa' refers to a social construct that embraces a continent with 54 independent states. This book refers mainly to the geopolitical context of the East African Community (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda) plus Ethiopia. But even within this context, political systems, social structures, economic

conditions and cultural practices vary greatly. Processes of post-colonial transformation, cultural change, rapid modernisation, rural-urban drift, transitions in the agrarian sector, and social and economic developments show tremendous country-specific and regional differences. There are gross differences with regard to geographical, ecological and climatic conditions as well as national and regional disparities in terms of cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity. It is, therefore, of utmost importance to apply a critical understanding towards the complexity, heterogeneity and uniqueness of social work in different African contexts (Spitzer, 2011).

In this article, a cross-cultural reflection of some theoretical and practical aspects of social work in African contexts is provided. The deliberations therein are partly informed by personal experiences and, therefore, reflect a personal perspective. I discuss the following areas: the challenge of overcoming Eurocentric thinking in international social work; the historical development of social work in African contexts; the importance of social work theories rooted in African culture; and some practice examples with a focus on counselling. Whilst emphasising the need for a genuine profile of social work in African societies, I also argue for international cooperation between African and Western partners, provided that such cooperation is based on principles of horizontal dialogue, mutual respect and equal participation.

The challenge of overcoming Eurocentric thinking

Having lived and worked in some African countries for some years (mainly in South and East Africa), I had the chance to develop a deep understanding of the social realities of poor and vulnerable population groups and the corresponding challenges for social work. What became imperative in these years was the constant need to critically reflect on my own perspectives and ways of thinking which are deeply rooted in my personal socialisation process, in the cultural norms I have internalised as someone who grew up in a European country, and in my education which allows – and restricts – me to think in particular scientific terms. It turned out that critical self-reflection with regard to the Eurocentric lens I was born with (or at least, I was raised with), coupled with a deep aspiration to understand the sometimes alien cultural contexts and complex social realities I was involved in, are the key to comprehending human relations, social behaviour and social work interventions in African contexts. A Swahili proverb says: “To get lost is to learn the way.” Sometimes, I got lost in translation, or in the complexity of spiritual meanings of social phenomena. But what I essentially learned is to respect the way many Africans cope with their daily challenges. With regard to social work, I can say that I hardly came across any project which did not, in one way or another, show features of what Osei-Hwedie (1993) and Mupediswa (2001) point at: social work approaches which are culture-specific and developmental in nature; which are understood and accepted in local contexts; and which show tangible effects for the people living in extremely difficult circumstances, albeit sometimes in a very modest way. The crucial challenge is that many of these practices are not thoroughly reflected in scientific terms; neither are they sufficiently taught at schools of social work. The question remains: Where do social workers obtain the essential knowledge which they need for their day-to-day practice, if not at training level?

As has been stated by Badwall and Razack (2012, 136), the “spread of social work has been historically mired in colonisation and whiteness”. According to these authors, “[t]his situation is still evident through the ways in which the exportation of knowledge and practice continues alongside the perpetuation and dominance of Western knowledge production and consumption.” (ibid.) In order to avoid such a pervasive situation, overcoming Eurocentric, Western-based thinking is an imperative when mutual learning processes ought to be successful. This is the basic philosophy in this article, written from a European perspective, or, in East African terms, written by a ‘*mzungu*’ (Swahili term for white person). Being white has become a distinct feature in my years in Africa. The term *mzungu*, which describes this whiteness, can have many different meanings. Most of the time it is associated with being a European, a light-skinned stranger who not only has money but also knowledge. In my case, applying a trans-cultural lens, I would add: someone who tries to transcend his whiteness into something which goes beyond simple dichotomies of being either white or black; or African or European. In a global society, the open-mindedness and respect for the other, coupled with the willingness to cross over one’s own cultural background and even identity, becomes paramount not only for social work, but for human relations in general. In my view, this claim also applies to African elites, including social work scholars, who too often have lost touch with people living at grassroots level and their cultural heritage.

The legacy of colonialism and the struggle for a genuine profile

African cultures had a long-standing tradition of social and community support systems long before the advent of modern social welfare and social work practice (Mwansa, 2012). But these systems got heavily distorted and eroded by the impact of slavery and colonialism. When comparing the history of social work in Western spheres (such as the United States of America and Europe) with contexts in the Global South (such as Africa), two distinct patterns become apparent (cf. Healy, 2008). On the one hand, social work in European and US-American contexts emerged as a response to address the negative side effects of industrialisation, modernisation and urbanisation. In the face of mass impoverishment, increasing deprivation and harsh employment conditions, formal social work training was developed and organised to meet the needs of staff providing social services to families, orphans, widows, immigrants and young working women. Thus, it can be argued that social work in these contexts evolved as an indigenous response to the conditions and social problems of late nineteenth century life. On the other hand, the emergence of social work in African contexts took place under completely different historical circumstances. The evolution of social work in Africa can in fact only be understood in connection with the broader processes of imperialism, colonialism, modernisation and globalisation, and their respective impact.

It is significant to note that nearly all African countries were subjected to some form of colonialism or imperialism at some time in their histories, which impacted the way social welfare institutions and social work services were introduced and sustained. (Asamoah, 1997, 311)

When social services and welfare programmes first came into being in African countries, there was no such thing like industrialisation comparable to Europe, nor was there an explicit will of the colonial powers to offer social support to the masses of their oppressed and exploited colonies. On the contrary, social work in its initial structures materialised as an element of colonial planning, with a clear mission to benefit the colonial state and its economic interests and not its subjugated citizens, as Cox and Pawar (2013, 8) aptly state:

Social work accompanied colonialism essentially to meet the needs and aspirations of the colonial powers, rather than to allow social work to make a contribution to these countries' development. The colonial powers believed that they were bringing these territories into the modern civilized world, and such social welfare services as were established reflected this objective.

These colonial measures were accompanied by missionary work. The missionaries introduced Western education, health and other social services to the African colonies, thus laying another foundation to social work in African countries (Midgley, 1981). After most African states became independent in the 1960s, 'modern' social work structures were introduced to these countries. Under the auspices of the United Nations, and with support from Western social work stakeholders and international development agencies, a number of schools of social work were established. The training staff at these institutions went abroad and "studied the social policies of the western countries, learned how their social services were administered and were taught western theories and methods of social work". (Midgley 1981, 56) Social welfare services in the newly independent African nations were equally modelled on Western approaches. Midgley (1981) termed this process "professional imperialism", thus critically referring to the impact of the unchallenged imposition of Western-based social work theories, concepts and methods to non-Western contexts:

Schools of social work have been created in many developing countries, and, as in the West, many have been incorporated into universities. Here students are trained to apply principles of social work in the same way as are students in western countries; they study the same textbooks, read the same journals and are taught the same theories and methods. (Midgley, 1981, xii)

If these students entered the field as qualified social workers, facing African realities of extreme poverty, rampant destitution and widespread social exclusion, what happened then? The uncritical adoption of Western social work ideas and social policy concepts raised two serious concerns: First, how would these theories and practices fit into the given cultural contexts of the respective African countries? Second, did they really provide meaningful responses to the prevalent social problems, given the fact that they were developed under completely different circumstances?

As a response to the first question, a trend characterised by the rejection of Western models and a search for indigenous forms of social work emerged in the 1970s. In this "era of indigenization" (Healy, 2008, 153), a call for appropriate, culture-specific, 'indigenous' approaches and strategies in order to increase the effectiveness of social work education and practice in African contexts became dominant (Osei-Hwedie, 1993). Rankopo and

Osei-Hwedie (2011), advocating relevant social work in African contexts, stress the importance of local social environments for social work to be effective, the centre of which is the community, “the bedrock of culture” (ibid., 138). The indigenisation efforts in Africa are mirrored in the documents of ASWEA, the Association for Social Work Education in Africa (Kreitzer, 2012). This association was active from 1971 to 1989 and acted as a predecessor of the current Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa (ASSWA) which was founded in 2005 (Mwansa, 2010). Not only was ASWEA the driving force behind the call for indigenisation, it also offered the institutional back-up to put the issue of social development on the social work agenda (Kreitzer, 2012). This provided a truly indigenous response to the second question stated above, namely a conceptual model of developmental social work education and practice as opposed to rather remedial-oriented concepts (Mupediszwa, 2001). This requires a scientific base rooted in African knowledge which will be discussed next.

Social work theories: The need for a thorough scientific base rooted in African knowledge systems

In the 1950s, social development as a distinct approach to social work and social welfare emerged in the Global South to address the problems of mass poverty and social deprivation (Midgley, 2009). Referring to a seminal definition provided by Midgley (1995), the concept of social development refers to a process of planned social change intended to promote the well-being of the population as a whole in conjunction with a dynamic process of economic development. In the social development approach, social work is conceptualised with a strong social change function in that it postulates a process of ongoing improvement in people’s well-being and in wider social conditions. This notion of change applies to both direct social work practice with the aim of personal growth as well as to macro-social work interventions where collective improvements are stressed (Midgley, 2010; see also Lombard in this volume). Developmental social work involves the use of investment strategies as well as the adoption of community-based, participatory and rights-based interventions (Midgley, 2010). Patel (2009, 53) points at the promotion of social and economic inclusion of the poor, disadvantaged and oppressed through developmentally oriented social work interventions:

A focus on the population as a whole but with a strong leaning to addressing the needs of the poor, those who are most disadvantaged and populations at risk of discrimination, social oppression and social exclusion is a further tenet of developmental social work.

When looking at recent debates and publications, one must conclude that the social development approach seems to have emerged as the most influential theory and concept in social work in Africa (Chitereka, 2009; Hochfeld *et al.*, 2009; Patel, 2009; Lombard and Wairire, 2010; Butterfield and Abye, 2013; Patel and Hochfeld, 2013; Twikirize *et al.*, 2013). In consideration of the social problems the profession has to deal with on the continent, this comprehensive approach seems to be in a position to give social work in Africa a genuine profile and to have the potential for a “paradigm shift” (Chitereka, 2009)

in order to make a difference in the lives of the majority of the African population in the twenty-first century.

In South Africa, the transformation from the politics of Apartheid to democracy was accompanied by a reform of the welfare system based on a developmental understanding of social welfare and social work, culminating in the adoption of the *White Paper for Social Welfare* in 1997 (Lombard, 2008; Patel, 2009). Two aspects might help social work educators and practitioners in other African countries (and, of course, their counterparts in the West) understand the agenda of developmental social work better when looking at the South African context.

First, Lombard's (2008) observation that traditional and developmental social work are not mutually exclusive is very important and refers to the idea that generalist social work can be accommodated within a broader developmental paradigm.

Second, a developmental approach in social policy and social work can, and indeed, should be linked to broader theoretical and/or philosophical notions which are relevant in a given social and cultural context. In the case of South Africa, social development thinking and practice were linked to the principles of *ubuntu*, a term denoting humanity and care for others as an expression of this humanity (Patel, 2009). Dean (2010, 199) locates the ethics of social development in line with *ubuntu* and calls for initiatives that must be "universal in their approach" and which should serve the purpose "to underwrite the mutual obligations and attachments that people have for one another". Such deliberations open a door for social work theories towards a critical reflection on existing African knowledge systems, epistemologies and conventional wisdom that can be adapted into efforts of development, democratisation and empowerment of the people.

In East Africa, a wide range of such cultural, ethical and political knowledge systems exists – only that these concepts are rarely aligned with social work. One example can be found in the Tanzanian *ujamaa* system which is deeply rooted in notions and values of the African extended family and community (*ujamaa* literally means familyhood). Theoretically, the politics of *ujamaa* were thought to contribute to distributive justice, collective rights and global hospitality in society (Rwiza, 2010). The ideals of *ujamaa* have been associated with principles of self-reliance which have both an economic and an educational meaning. In the educational thinking of Julius Nyerere, the first president of the United Republic of Tanzania after independence, the concept of self-reliance is seen as a way to liberate people so that they become "a self-reliant person in society" (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986, 250). Although *ujamaa* is no longer a popular policy in Tanzania, it is deeply rooted in the everyday philosophies of the people and even in popular lyrics of some hip-hop artists.

Another example refers to the Kenyan situation where the concept of *harambee* (Swahili for to pull on one string) enjoys great popularity, particularly among the rural population. *Harambee* can be defined as an indigenous form of collective self-help where people come together and assist each other in agricultural activities such as weeding and ploughing (Mbithi, 1974). Ngau (1987, 524) describes *harambee* as "the collective and cooperative participation of a community in an attempt to fill perceived needs through utilization of

its own resources". After independence, *harambee* was incorporated into government's efforts to build a new nation, both at a micro level of community self-help efforts as well as in national macro-social development planning (Ngau, 1987). Collective efforts led to the building of schools, health facilities, churches, roads and water facilities. Traditionally, *harambee* was not only used to provide local mutual assistance but also to foster cultural values. While these cultural roles have been widely distorted and abandoned, the material aspect has come to the fore (Ngau, 1987). Yet, as has been stated by Muia (2011), much of what has been achieved in rural development efforts in Kenya is due to such community self-help initiatives.

These are just two examples of a much broader range of social theories, traditional philosophies and African ethics which could be integrated into social work theory, education and practice. As such, culturally relevant approaches can be combined with elements of developmental social work and applied at different societal levels. What is needed is empirical research and theoretical reflection on these concepts with regard to their relevance for social work in a given socioeconomic and political context. What is equally needed is a change in the mind-set of social work scholars and educators, namely to overcome a deeply rooted neglect of their own cultural knowledge systems which could play a much bigger role in their work than many other theories deriving from Western countries. Due to the logic of marginalisation and oppression of African indigenous knowledge systems over centuries, Western and African scientists alike continue to question their epistemological base and view them as an unscientific accumulation of native wisdom (Ogunbure, 2013). However, there is not only an abundance of theories in African cultures which are yet to be revitalised and acknowledged, there is also clearly a need to return to these theories in order to interrogate the contemporary world order and the dialectic between capitalism and modernity and their implications for non-Western societies (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2012). In a globalised world, one should be open-minded to positive and viable influences from other cultures, and this also applies to social work in African contexts. As Kreitzer (2012, 282) put it: "What is needed is a blending together of modern and traditional knowledge that honours its own traditions as well as accepting other world views when appropriate." Yet culture and traditions change over time, and some cultural practices and values are essentially not in line with basic principles of social work such as human rights, social justice and gender equality. This is aptly stated by Rankopo and Osei-Hwedie (2011, 143):

However, basing the development of the profession on indigenous social and cultural structures does not negate the fact that the adherence to indigenization also recognizes some of the negative influences of culture and other processes of social organization that need changing. Indigenization, therefore, embodies progressive social change and the fact that cultural inheritance is ever changing alongside perceptions and environments.

Social work has to critically reflect on both the positive and constructive elements as well as the sometimes destructive and discriminative realities of culture. These realities pose practical and ethical challenges for social work professionals who have to deal with the

delicate balance of respecting cultural norms and values on the one hand and speaking up for human rights, equality and non-discrimination on the other hand (Healy, 2007).

With a thorough theoretical base rooted in relevant knowledge systems, social work can both accentuate its role in national social development as well as strengthen its status both as a profession and as an academic discipline that deserves its right place in the scientific community. Additionally, elaborated theories will contribute to more professionalised social work practice.

A view at practice: Counselling in African contexts

In this section, I refer to a traditional field of social work practice, namely counselling. When I teach counselling at my home university in Austria, I normally talk about principles and techniques of client-centred, systems-based and solution-focused counselling, about psychoanalytical theories of transference and counter-transference, and self-reflective and relationship skills in counselling processes. Interestingly, when my students who spend a semester in one of our East African partner institutions return home, they report on similar contents with regard to their attended courses on guidance and counselling. Sometimes, I have to realise that they are more familiar with the writings of Carl Rogers and Sigmund Freud than their counterparts who remained in Austria. At the same time, I am astonished that they have hardly come across any information on 'African' ways of counselling. But in fact, counselling is a good example of how to match Western-based theories and methodologies with indigenous approaches grounded in African knowledge as described above. This will be further elaborated here. Mwiti and Dueck (2007) stress the importance of a triple foundation of counselling perspectives in African contexts, namely: spiritual elements rooted in local culture, Christian faith and Western models of thought, with a clear focus on the first two aspects:

Appreciating people's indigenous cultural value systems, speaking in a language they can understand, discovering and using their metaphors, and planting seeds of change by using biblical practices that build on people's traditions – all these will build up a practice of psychology and counselling in Africa that resonates with people's identity. This way, healing will be sustainable over time and will become a ripple of positive change over generations. (Mwiti and Dueck, 2007, 85)

Gichinga (2007) provides a similar rationale and argues for the contextualisation of Western terminologies and approaches of counselling. In her view, the training and practice of counselling in African contexts should be based on the Bible, on African culture and spirituality, and on Western psychology, thus stressing a holistic perspective in any kind of intervention: "People tend to think holistically, meaning that a healer should be able to provide all manner of interventions – spiritual, physical, emotional, relational and supernatural." (Gichinga, 2007, 19)

Such statements must be read with regard to the historical melding of different religious and spiritual belief systems. The process of syncretism led to situations where indigenous African spirituality coexists with Christian or Islamic religions. Mbiti (1969) points at the proliferation of independent church movements in Africa as an attempt by African peoples to 'indigenise' Christianity and to interpret and apply it in ways that render Christianity

both practical and meaningful to them. Although professional social work is not bound to any kind of religion or spirituality, any serious intervention is well advised to take into account clients' denominations which affect their life holistically and totally. In practice, there are many examples where professional counselling is accompanied by faith-based guidance. Such interventions have a strong notion towards community life since African religion functions more on a communal than an individual basis (Mbiti, 1991).

Whilst emphasising the importance of religion and tradition in African ways of life, it is equally noteworthy that African societies do not exist in a historical vacuum. Influences of rapid modernisation, urbanisation, secularisation and the spread of new telecommunication systems, information technologies and secular lifestyles based on Western ideals impose a drastic cultural change on people's lives. Today, the widespread use of mobile telephones has revolutionised communication in Africa. Long and tiresome travelling which was both time-consuming and cost-provoking a few years ago, particularly in rural areas, can be avoided nowadays. This has implications for social work practice. A family visit that could have taken a whole day in the past is now a matter of a short telephone call. Modernisation processes also pose new challenges to marriage and family counselling since they profoundly affect marital dynamics, gender roles, family structures and inter-generational relations.

I might have a rather radical view on counselling in African contexts, but I think what social workers need least are Western psychologies and counselling methods. Whereas the focus on spirituality and religion is definitely a prerequisite for successful interventions, the social and material dimension of a person in need of counselling must equally be addressed. Socially, individuals are embedded in family and community structures which play an essential role in their well-being as part of a broader entity. A focus on the individual person might even contribute to the alienation and detachment of the individual from his or her community. Furthermore, an individual might need spiritual support to overcome emotional distress, but this distress will most probably be linked to desperate household conditions rooted in poverty, malnutrition and lack of basic necessities. In Burundi and Rwanda, there is a saying that "an empty stomach cannot listen", thus stressing the need to care for the immediate needs of people suffering from poverty, hunger and deprivation before professionals can think of counselling and psycho-social support. Within the context of a social development approach, psycho-social counselling (which is sometimes absolutely necessary in the individual and collective healing process of human beings) would be ideally linked to socioeconomic support mechanisms at individual, family and community level. Laird (2008) stresses the need for social workers in African contexts to focus on people's strengths, capabilities, resources, competences and resilience in order to support their coping and survival strategies. In the view of this author, social networks, reciprocal exchange of resources within communities, the collaboration of inter-generational households, livelihood diversification and household's productive assets play a major role in social work interventions, and hence in counselling processes. Furthermore, counselling in African contexts should ideally transcend the micro-macro-divide of social work practice interventions. At times, social workers will address the

individual needs of a person through counselling and provision of material support (such as job creation, income generation or asset building) while at the same time they will reflect on the root causes of the client's miserable living conditions, thus leading to the conclusion that something must be done at a more structural, sociopolitical level to address the situation at hand.

According to Patel, Kaseke and Midgley (2013), indigenous welfare and community-based practices have a major role to play in social development, and, I would argue, also for counselling processes seen from a broader perspective.

In Tanzania, I came across an interesting approach to support urban children at risk, particularly orphaned children, child domestic workers and child-headed households. A street children organisation called Tuamoyo focuses its preventive, community-based approach on the traditional understanding of the *mama mkubwa* concept – a Swahili term referring to the elder maternal sister who plays a significant role in the family system, particularly when it comes to times of crisis and death (Spitzer, 2006). A *mama mkubwa* is usually the one who takes care of children when their parents pass away. In the organisation's approach, particular women are identified and trained to serve the purpose of a *mama mkubwa* for up to ten vulnerable children in the community. These voluntary assistants establish a trusting relationship with the children, supervise and counsel them, and provide support in terms of food, shelter, scholastic materials and health care. In conjunction with the professional social workers, they also network with community leaders, schools, local artisans, welfare officers and the police. These activities are accompanied by advocacy and awareness building for children's rights in the community and at a political level. When I discussed the *mama mkubwa* concept with social work educators, they acknowledged the significance and efficiency of the approach for social work practice, but at the same time they admitted that they had never thought of incorporating it into their teaching. Hence, the need to link local ways of support, counselling and coping with the social work curriculum cannot be overstated. Sometimes, it requires an outsider's perspective to serve as a trigger to detect such gaps.

The potential of international social work programmes: Bridging the gap between Western dominance and African understatement

International exchange projects and programmes have been prominent throughout the history and development of social work as a global profession (Healy, 2008). Gray and Coates (2008) sharply criticise one-way processes of technology transfer where knowledge coming from Western countries is regarded as being superior. Instead, these authors plead for culturally appropriate social work that emphasises responsiveness to local contexts and cultures. In this regard, Rankopo and Osei-Hwedie (2011, 141) state that "indigenization does not negate collaboration with external partners and experts, and seeking resources of capacity-building". So what is the role of international partners in this endeavour?

In my view, the only way to overcome Midgley's (2008) warning of prolonged "professional imperialism" in international partnership programmes between Western and African social work stakeholders lies in an authentic and critical horizontal dialogue – a concept derived from the work of the Brazilian educator and advocate for a critical

pedagogy, Paolo Freire (1996). Freire saw dialogue as a “horizontal relationship” of which mutual trust between the dialoguers is a logical condition. Such a dialogue implies mutual respect and equal participation in decision-making processes, despite the fact that the partners involved start from different backgrounds, understandings and resources. In the context of North-South-relationships, paternalistic behaviour and one-way interventions where there is a clear demarcation between who the supplier of ideas or the ‘donor’ is on the one hand, and who the recipient or ‘beneficiary’ is on the other, are out of place (Spitzer, 2009). Ferguson (2005, 533) pleads for a multidirectional model of technology transfer in cross-cultural social work exchange programmes: “Essentially, this circular model rests upon the assumption that ideas and knowledge are fluid and are continuously adapted, re-adapted, implemented and re-implemented from one country or culture to another.”

Ferguson’s model tries to overcome the hegemony inherent in existing partnership programmes in which so-called developed countries are continuously the creators and donors of technology and ideas while the “developing countries” remain the recipients and modifiers of imported knowledge and practices. Instead, both sides act as what Ferguson (2005, 534) calls “co-participants”.

International cooperation can positively impact social work education, practice, research and policies. Joint research initiatives can identify existing gaps and establish solid empirical grounds for the professionalisation of social work. Financial support from development funds can be utilised for capacity-building. Joint publications can contribute to the sharing of scientific knowledge from different perspectives, with the aim of mutual learning. Social work in African contexts is rich in history and creativity, and it has unique characteristics and concepts despite prolonged periods of imposed theories from outside. Social workers all over the globe can learn a lot from their African counterparts provided that the kind of partnership they maintain is based on a dialogical philosophy and an authentic will to critically reflect on their relationship – which is too often imbalanced and asymmetric.

Concluding remarks

Social work in African contexts has to deal with a variety of challenges including the struggle for a genuine professional profile in theory and practice in order to meet the particular social problems in these contexts. The social development approach has emerged as the most influential concept in Africa, yet there are other knowledge systems which are still to be re-discovered and modified for social work theory and capitalised for practice. In different parts of the continent, it can be observed that recent efforts to strengthen relevant and appropriate methods and concepts have been successful. In East Africa, in particular, the PROSOWO project¹ has acted as a catalyst for change and the promotion of social work education, theory, research, policy and practice (see the many contributions in this volume).

¹ Project “Promotion of Professional Social Work in East Africa”, funded by the Austrian Partnership Programme in Higher Education & Research for Development (APPEAR).

As someone who writes from a cross-cultural perspective, I allow myself to place emphasis on a more personal tone in these concluding comments.² I assert that social work has the potential to meaningfully contribute to the overall social development of African nations. Consequently, the profession deserves its rightful place in society. Social work students should be proud of what they are studying. Social work practitioners should be recognised and honoured for their contribution towards a society free of poverty, inequality and injustice. Social work educators and researchers should gain full support from their respective institutions and governments to be able to fulfil their tasks. Politicians should listen to the rich expertise of social workers and incorporate their human capital into their strategies and policies. And the international social work community is well advised to not forget about their African comrades, but to seek for tangible avenues to support efforts towards strengthening social work in these complex and difficult circumstances; not as imposed aid, but as joint efforts which eventually lead to mutual benefit.

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² These lines are partly taken from my speech "PROSOWO: A Project to Professionalise Social Work in East Africa" at the conference "Professional Social Work in East Africa" in Kampala, 16 March 2014.

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Social Work and Poverty Reduction in Africa: The Indelible Reality

Vishanthie Sewpaul

Introduction

Just what is the reality of Africa's poverty? The only reality about Africa's poverty is that it constitutes a complexity of multiple and vexing realities. For every possible diagnosis for Africa's ills there is a differential diagnosis; for every possible argument, a counter-argument exists. After a decade of work in Africa, Jeffrey Sachs (2005) concluded that Africa's poverty reflected the interactions of history, geography, domestic policies, and geopolitics, which left the continent stuck in a poverty trap. This poverty trap has been exacerbated by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which has had a devastating effect on all levels of society, from the micro context of the family to national economies.

In this chapter I begin by reviewing definitions of poverty and the extent of poverty in Africa. This is followed by a discussion on factors that contribute to poverty in Africa. Given the inextricable link between the goals of poverty alleviation and the goals of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the MDGs are briefly reviewed and I question the popular notion of Africa's "failure" to meet the MDGs. As part of the discussion on social work and poverty reduction, particular attention is paid to the International Labour Organisation's (ILO's) Decent Work Agenda and its relationship to the MDGs, to the important role of social security in poverty reduction and the political aspects of social work interventions.

Poverty defined

Sachs (2005) identified three levels of poverty: extreme poverty, moderate poverty and relative poverty. Extreme poverty means that households cannot meet their minimal survival needs; people have little or no access to food, shelter, safe drinking water, sanitation, education, health care and basic clothing. Such inability to attain a minimum standard of living has been a conventional definition of poverty (World Bank, 1990), set by the World Bank as US\$ 1 per day per person, measured at purchasing power parity (PPP). In 2005, US\$ 1.25 was used as the poverty line (Chen and Ravallion, 2008). Extreme poverty occurs exclusively in developing countries.

Moderate poverty, with World Bank measures of between \$1 and \$2 per person per day, refers to people being able to just barely meet their basic needs.

Relative poverty refers to household income that is below a given proportion of average national income. The relatively poor in high-income countries lack access to entertainment, recreation and to good quality health care and education that pave the way for upward mobility (Sachs, 2005).

Du Toit (2005) uses the concept “chronic poor” that is similar to that of extreme poverty, where people are caught in poverty traps that might be inter-generational. The Chronic Poverty Research Centre (cited in du Toit, 2005, 2) defined the chronically poor as:

...those who experience poverty for extended periods of time or throughout their entire lives, whose children are also likely to remain poor, and who have benefitted least or are likely to benefit least from economic growth and national and international development initiatives.

Du Toit (2005) warns against a narrow economic understanding of poverty and underscores the importance of the intersection of race, class and gender and the “entrenched dynamics of vulnerability, marginalization and powerlessness” in poverty discourses (du Toit, 2005, 21). Du Toit (2005, 23) argues that “the most fateful aspect of long-term poverty is its disabling dynamic, the way in which it saps the ability of individuals and groups of people to constitute themselves effectively as agents”.

Understanding the poor’s sense of agency (and/or lack thereof) and vulnerability, marginalisation, and powerlessness calls for qualitative and experiential understanding, and not merely a quantitative analysis of income and expenditure.

In more recent years, poverty has increasingly been broadly theorised to include denial of people’s basic capabilities that contribute to decreased life expectancy, literacy, health, participation, responsibility, personal security, environmental degradation and the absence of real opportunities to lead a meaningful life and to realise one’s capabilities (Arimah, 2004; Sen, 1999; UNDP, 1997). A more comprehensive and holistic understanding of poverty, rather than the more conventional economic view, might allow for a deeper appreciation of the lived experience of poverty, the structural determinants of poverty and for the formulation of policies and programmes to deal with and prevent poverty more effectively.

Factors that contribute to poverty in Africa

From slave trade and colonialism to the international financial institutions’ imposition of structural adjustment policies on corrupt dictatorships, civil strife and lack of democratic practices and institutional capacity; unfair trade practices; the effects of distorted globalisation that excludes much of Africa; capital and labour flight; ravaging diseases; poor infrastructure; and landlocked countries, Africa suffers from intractable and unrelenting factors that contribute to its poverty. It is not within the scope of this paper to discuss each of these factors in detail, and no single one on its own can explain Africa’s poverty. Cilliers (2006) asserts that poverty is the principal reason for civil wars in Africa, but that poverty is, in turn, the consequence of poor policy choices and bad governance.

A popular view is that Africa's poverty is self-made as it is a corrupt continent filled with chaos, conflict and dictatorial rule (Mills, 2011). To this kind of populist view (that reproduces itself on account of widespread racism) and citing evidence with regard to the debilitating effects of structural adjustment programmes, and the West's involvement in propping up illegitimate regimes (including the most atrocious apartheid regime in South Africa) and the murder of progressive and charismatic leaders, Jeffrey Sachs (2005, 198) responds as follows:

When it comes to charges of bad governance, the West should be a bit more circumspect. Little surpasses the Western world in the cruelty and depredations that it has long imposed on Africa. Three centuries of slave trade, from around 1500 to the 1800s, were followed by a century of brutal colonial rule. Far from lifting Africa economically, the colonial era left Africa bereft of educated citizens and leaders, basic infrastructure and public health facilities.

The borders of the newly formed independent states were arbitrarily drawn along the lines of the former colonialists, entrenching divisions along ethnic lines with disastrous consequences.

But neither colonialism nor the West's involvement in the destruction of Africa is sufficient to explain Africa's poverty and development crisis. Contrary to the views of Mills (2011), Booth (2003, 868) contends that "the image of Africa as a continent in the grip of powerful external forces... has proven extraordinarily resistant to contrary evidence". There are shifting and heterogeneous positions, with Africans themselves realising "that the continent must look beyond its colonial past for the causes of current conflicts" (Annan, 2006, 241). African leaders must take responsibility for their complicity with the West for the plundering of Africa and for retaining it in its poverty trap. Hancock, way back in 1989, provided insightful details about the mutually corrupt relationships between African leaders and their Western counterparts, including those in the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and some organs of the United Nations. He metaphorically described how African leaders were tripping over their own Gucci shoes as they rushed to their off-shore accounts. A recent example of this is Robert Mugabe's enriching himself through the plundering of Zimbabwe (Martin, 2007). Evidence suggests that the situation might be worsening, with the Transparency International corruption score showing that 13 of the bottom 25 countries were African, with Somalia at the lowest and South Africa recording a steady decline between 2007 and 2011 (The Guardian, 2011).

The African Development Bank (2011) refers to the increasing depredations and dishonesty under privatisation in Tunisia and links the discontent and revolutionary movement in part to the corruption of the Ben Ali regime. The discontent is manifest in many parts of Africa in the numerous protest actions linked to unemployment, inequality, poor service delivery from the public sector, and to lack of access to basic sanitation, shelter, water and electricity. The anger is fuelled by people who see their basic rights violated while the political elite enrich themselves.

One of the factors rarely considered is geopolitics. Sachs (2005) professes that Africa's lack of navigable rivers and natural inlets has historically contributed to its poverty. Africa has more landlocked countries (15) than any other continent. Rural populations, especially in these countries, are cut off from major transportation routes and telecommunications. Thus, if the global economy has any benefits for Africa, large parts of its population remain totally excluded from it. With the economic downturn and the high prices of fuel, transportation and food, those who are poor find themselves moving into deeper poverty. Furthermore, disasters such as mudslides, droughts and floods that are occurring with increasing frequency on account of climate change have their most profound impact on the poor.

To the above one has to add the endemic nature of malaria in tropical parts of Africa and the pervasive effects of HIV/AIDS. Diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, which are blights in Africa, are both precursors to and consequences of poverty. Disease and death have huge bio-psycho-social impacts at the households and community level and at the macro level, impacting a country's gross domestic product (GDP). Over 70% of AIDS infections occur in Africa with the most infections occurring in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe (UNAIDS, 2000; UNDP, 2002). Whiteside (2002) asserts that AIDS can push economies into decline and keep them there. Describing HIV/AIDS as an unmitigated tragedy and a development disaster in Africa, Sachs (2005) goes on to provide quite a scathing attack on the international financial institutions' failure to deal with malaria and HIV/AIDS in Africa effectively. Up until 2000, within the most minimalist responses to HIV/AIDS by the IMF and the WB, the use of antiretroviral drugs to treat HIV/AIDS in Africa was not mentioned. The costs of this were certainly high, especially when combined with national governments' unwillingness to integrate treatment and prevention strategies to deal with the HIV/AIDS crisis (Sewpaul, 2002).

The high prevalence of disease in poor countries; the lack of education especially of women; and financial, social, cultural and geographic barriers to the use of modern contraception, all contribute to the demographic trap, in which impoverished families have large families thus reproducing the poverty cycle as they cannot afford to educate, clothe and feed their children. Where choices have to be made, it is girls who are denied access to health, education and food. Parents make up for the high infant and child mortality rates by having more children with the anticipation that at least some of them will grow into adulthood, leading to an aporetic situation where "[h]igh population growth leads to deeper poverty, and deeper poverty contributes to high fertility rates" (Sachs, 2005, 66), reflecting a circular relationship between factors that contribute to and those that are consequences of poverty – not only with fertility rates but with illiteracy, malnutrition and disease as well.

The failure of donor countries to honour their promises also puts Africa in an invidious position to deal with poverty. Over 40 years ago, the governments of rich countries agreed to give 0.7% of their GNI (Gross National Income) as official aid to poor countries for development assistance. However, the average aid delivered each year has actually been

between 0.2 and 0.4%. The shortfall has, therefore, accumulated to US\$ 4.17 trillion dollars at 2009 prices, while total aid delivered in that same time frame has reached just over US\$ 3.04 trillion¹.

Given the widespread dissatisfaction over the structural adjustment policies that were imposed over the 1980s and 1990s, developing countries were asked by the IMF and the World Bank to prepare, via national consultative processes, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) (Booth, 2003). Using the Ghana PRSP as an example, Laird (2008) claims that the PRSPs are rooted in a neoliberal paradigm and are effectively no different from Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) as they de-emphasise the role of the public sector and transfer responsibility to non-governmental organisations, individuals and families across the health and social sectors. The costs of SAPs have been borne largely by the poor and have seen a large increase in urban poverty (Rowden, 2009). According to Booth (2003, 871), researchers working in different countries in Africa concluded that the prognoses of PRSPs ranged from “utterly dismal” to “cautiously hopeful”, depending on a range of factors, with internal factors including civil society activism, domestic interests, in-country factions and rivalries and political movements. While not negating the constraints imposed by the international financial institutions, Booth (2003) asserts that powerful actors within recipient countries might subvert poverty reforms and concludes that: “In all of this ... politics matters a great deal.” (ibid., 872) Even where countries, such as Tanzania, have well developed PRSPs, the translation of policy targets into action at community levels is low, and despite the emphasis on consultation in the PRSPs, local government structures have often been excluded from central PRSPs processes (Marcus, Wilkinson and Marshall, 2002). These authors conclude that:

PRSP processes are more accurately characterized as ‘business as usual’, and institutional and political pressures reduce the extent to which they represent a real opportunity for changes in the way development is planned and carried out. (ibid., 1127)

Globalisation and its concomitant neoliberal capitalism have contributed to the commodification of every facet of our lives, with the world being turned into a global market, where anything, including human beings, can be bought and sold. The privatisation of state assets, cutbacks in public expenditure on health, welfare and education imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and liberalisation of trade have had devastating effects on the people of Africa, especially the most vulnerable: women and children (Hart, 2002; Bond, 2005; Saul, 2006; Sewpaul, 2006). Liberalisation has often resulted in massive imports, which undermine local production and prices, and increase unemployment, placing enormous strains on the poor; contributing to children dropping out of school; women and child trafficking; engagement in dangerous work; and starvation. Although by no means radical, Mills (2011, 62) accedes to the limits of capitalism:

... not least because of its ‘boom and bust’ nature and the costs this inflicted on the poor and vulnerable, the inevitable widening of wealth divides within society under this system, and the political tensions that emanated from these.

¹ <http://www.globalissues.org/> [accessed 7 April 2011].

Add the above to Africa's debt burden and we have the fertile conditions for extreme poverty, disease, malnutrition and death that characterise so much of Africa.

The prevalence of poverty in Africa

Arimah (2004) contends that 15 of the 20 poorest countries of the world are in Africa. According to Sachs (2005), the numbers of extreme poor have risen in sub-Saharan Africa since 1981, and almost half of Africa's population lives in extreme poverty, on less than US\$ 1 per day. On a recent website² that consolidated data from several reputable sources, the following disturbing details, reflecting the impact of poverty and conflict on children, were provided:

- 200,000 child-slaves are sold every year in Africa. There are an estimated 8,000 girl-slaves in West Africa alone.
- About 120,000 African children are participating in armed conflicts. Some are as young as seven years old.
- Children account for half of all civilian casualties in wars in Africa.
- One in six African children dies before the age of five. Most of these deaths could be prevented.
- Nearly one third of children in sub-Saharan Africa are underweight.
- In sub-Saharan Africa, measles takes the life of a child nearly every minute of every day. An effective measles vaccine costs as little as US\$ 1 per child.
- Between 12 and 14 million African children have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS.
- In sub-Saharan Africa, 43% of children do not have safe, accessible drinking water.
- 64% of children do not have adequate sanitation.
- Only 57% of African children are enrolled in primary education, and one in three of those do not complete school.
- For every 100 boys, there are only 83 girls enrolled at primary school.

Writing about the deadly impacts of neoliberalism, Rowden (2009) asserts that 74% of deaths in Africa arise from communicable diseases, maternal and perinatal conditions and nutritional deficiencies, as opposed to 6% in Europe that die from these sources. The tragedy is that all of these are preventable, and directly related to poverty and under-development.

Using 1998 and 2002 UNDP and 2001 World Bank studies based on the Human Poverty Index that presents the multidimensional nature of poverty in a single index, Arimah (2004) details the following: Human poverty (as opposed to econometric measures of a US\$ per day) affected over 50% of the population in Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone, Mauritius, South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana.

The following section discusses the implications of the prevalence of poverty in Africa for reaching the MDG targets.

² <http://www.fightpoverty.mmbrico.com/facts/africa.html> [accessed 8 June 2012].

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The MDGs are a set of goals to be achieved by 2015. They comprise the following eight goals:³

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

Sahn and Siftel (2003) via an analysis of demographic and health surveys of several African countries to examine the progress of African countries to achieve the MDGs, conclude that the results “paint a discouraging picture ... [and] that, in the absence of dramatic changes, the MDGs are not going to be reached for most indicators in most countries” (ibid., 46). While the targets are unlikely to be reached by 2015, the authors found that statistically significant improvements occurred in many countries. The following improvements were noted:

- While none of the countries included in the study were on target regarding modern contraceptive use, all made progress over the periods for which data was available.
- While countries are not on target to halve poverty by 2015, most countries have reduced poverty.
- More than half the countries have increased primary school enrolments, but only one was on target to reach the goal of universal enrolment.
- While only one country was on target to reduce malnutrition by two-thirds, four of the 14 countries reduced stunting in the 1990s.

Arimah (2004) indicates that African countries have increased investments in education, health and nutrition, and participation in decision-making and reduced military spending with mixed results. Countries such as Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Zimbabwe experienced increases in poverty between 1988 and 1999, while Ethiopia, Ghana and Uganda saw a decrease in poverty.

The UN Millennium Development Project (2005, 2) declares that:

Sub-Saharan Africa, most dramatically, has been in a downward spiral of AIDS, resurgent malaria, falling food output per person, deteriorating shelter conditions, and environmental degradation, so that most countries in the region are on a trajectory to miss most or all of the Goals.

Easterly (2009) offers a cogent argument that in using the MDGs as measures of performance, it has unfairly represented sub-Saharan Africa as a *failure* compared to other regions. Easterly (2009) further argues that the relative performance of Africa looks worse

³ <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals> [accessed 19 June 2011].

than it really is, as the way in which the targets are set make Africa's successes look like failures. If poverty rates fall as income grows, then Africa is disadvantaged with regard to MDG 1, where the targets are set as follows: 1.A) Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than US\$1 a day; 1.B) Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people; and 1.C) Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

Africa has the lowest per capita income of any region, and it will require historically unprecedented levels of growth to meet the target (Easterly, 2009) and it is being penalised for its initial high poverty rate. The initial starting conditions of Africa are not taken into consideration in measuring Africa's "failures". Clemens (2004) highlights that most African countries expanded primary enrolment more rapidly over the past five decades than Western countries did during their development, but African countries will still not reach the target of universal enrolment by 2015 as it started much further away than most countries in other regions.

With regard to MDG 4, reducing child mortality by two-thirds, Easterly (2009, 31) argues that:

...the goal of proportional reduction is more likely to be met by initially low mortality countries, while a goal of absolute reduction in child mortality rate would be more likely to be met in the initially high mortality countries.

Thus, the goal as stated, in proportional terms, is less likely to be met in Africa, and Africa's success in achieving a large absolute reduction in child mortality is labelled as a failure. Similar arguments are presented for the other MDGs. Easterly (2009, 34) concludes that even if one wanted to attribute benevolent interpretations to labelling Africa as a failure, it is:

...undesirable to exaggerate the 'Africa as failure' image, which in turn exaggerates the role of 'the West as Saviour' for Africa (as the MDG campaign has often played out in practice). It is demoralizing to have goals for Africa that can only be attained with progress that is without historical precedent from other regions or in Africa itself.

In essence, it means that to focus only on outcomes without considering the initial starting points of countries is unfair.

The fact that the design of MDGs casts Africa as a failure does not belie the fact that Africa's poverty is widespread, and deeply chronic and entrenched with marked inter-generational effects. Thomas Pogge's (2003) view is that MDG 1 is extremely under-ambitious and constitutes a lowering of goals previously supported, for example, the 1996 Rome Declaration on World Food Security. Pogge characterises MDG 1 as a crime against humanity on a large scale as it allows for at least half of the poor to continue living in poverty by 2015. This is perhaps a valid argument, considering the huge disparities and income differentials within and across nations, and the exorbitant amounts of money spent on the military and wars, and the bailout of banks to continue with their capitalist business as usual (Nixon, 2010). Africa's poverty does need urgent attention, and as shown in countries such as Tunisia, economic growth in itself does not guarantee peace, development and

pro-poor policies and development. Indeed inequality that might accompany economic growth is at the centre of much of the world's conflicts and revolutions.

Social work and poverty reduction

Social work, from its very early beginnings has been deeply intertwined with alleviating poverty. In the wide range of absolute and relative manifestations of poverty, poverty intervention remains the *sine qua non* of social work practice. Social work's simultaneous emphasis on both the life circumstances of people and the environment – the latter referring to those structural factors that contribute to poverty and life difficulties – have always marked the profession's efforts to mitigate the impact of poverty on people; to develop policies to prevent poverty; advocacy for greater economic security and life opportunities for people; and struggling for a fairer and more just world. From micro-level intervention to broad-based macro level policy formulation and advocacy, social workers are at the forefront of poverty work. Many of the problems that social workers engage with on a daily basis are a manifestation of structural causes of poverty and inequality.

The pernicious effects of poverty, and its closely allied counterparts – exclusion and discrimination – have a way of seeping into the lives of local communities, families and individuals to manifest in such issues as alcohol and drug abuse; abandoned, neglected and abused children; children living on the streets; practices that are harmful particularly to women and children such as child brides, female genital mutilation, child labour and human trafficking; unemployment; illiteracy; homelessness; and malnutrition, disease and death. Social workers are all too often the direct witnesses to the devastating effects of poverty and are directly involved in people's survival struggles.

Given the extent of poverty in Africa and its structural determinants linked to lack of democratic practices, corruption, conflicts and the pernicious consequences of neoliberalism, despite the best of intentions, social work on its own will only engender small gains. There needs to be political commitment and human will towards structural changes to alleviate poverty and its effects, and social workers need to agitate for such changes that will reduce poverty and increase people's access to basic services. Rowden (2009), providing empirical data, describes the relationship between user fees and health facility utilisation, with abolishing of user fees contributing to increased use. In Burundi, abolishing user fees in May 2006 contributed to a 41% increase in child outpatients, 61% increase for deliveries and 80% in attendance for Caesarean sections. In Kenya, attendance at hospital outpatient and health centres decreased by 38% with the introduction of user fees in 1989 (Yahie, 2000). Thus, universal free access to health care can go a long way in achieving the MDGs. The same applies to user fees in education. Given the interrelationship between the MDGs, universal free high quality public education is central to achieving almost all of the MGDS, not just MDG 2, and social workers must support this in addition to calls for full and decent employment and universal social security.

One of the indicators of MDG 1 is: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people. In a commentary to the International Labour Organisation's "Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization" (ILO, 2008, 1) which says that "Decent Work":

...involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organise and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.

Work is one of the most crucial aspects of human functioning. Pereira (2010) highlights the centrality of full and decent employment for the achievement of almost all of the MDGs. He goes on to say: "Work is the basis of the human social structure, the economy and even families and therefore, it is closely linked to development, growth and welfare issues." (ibid., 11)

The ILO cites case studies of Tanzania and Ethiopia where decent job creation contributed to successful outcomes on some of the MDGs. In Tanzania, the ILO (2007) reported on a project that linked the employment and income earning capacity of women to children's increased access to early childhood education and food, reduction in child labour and increased access of children to primary schooling. Similarly in Ethiopia, an ILO (2010) report indicated the success of a project titled "Poverty Reduction through Decent Employment Creation" that focused on gender and increased employment of women, thus contributing to MDG 3. Decent work is rarely considered a poverty reduction strategy but rather a by-product of development initiatives. Yet, work grants more than income; it provides access to many of the other basic resources such as food, shelter, clothing, leisure activities, increased self-esteem, health care and education and has far-reaching implications for achieving almost all of the MDGs. Linked to the Decent Work Agenda are the importance of social protection measures and social dialogue – the latter promoting democratic participation and consensus-building.

A Basic Income Grant (BIG) or a citizens' income can make a huge difference to poverty reduction (Samson, 2002; Sewpaul, 2005; Triegaardt, 2006; Nixon, 2010; Pereira, 2010). Social workers can join the BIG Coalition to lobby for this and provide national governments with empirical data that proves that a BIG does not encourage, as so popularly thought, laziness and dependency; neither is it a disincentive to labour market participation. Samson (2002, 32), who conducted research commissioned by the ILO through the Economic Policy Research Institute, concluded that a BIG in South Africa was feasible, affordable, and supportive of poverty reduction, economic growth and job creation. The BIG that has been piloted in Namibia has proved to be highly successful, with the following results (Basic Income Grant Coalition, 2009):

- Reduction in household poverty, with the proportion of people below the food poverty line dropping from 76% to 37% within a year;
- Increase in income generation activities from 44% to 55%;
- Increase in productive incomes by 14% and an increase in purchasing power, stimulating the local economy;
- Reduction of child malnutrition, with a 32% reduction in the rate of underweight children; and
- Improved access to health services.

Given that there is sufficient empirical evidence that universal social security benefits can contribute to the achievement of the MDGs and improved life circumstances of people, social workers should be far greater advocates for this than they currently are, and they should challenge the ideological bias that politicians seem to have against universal social security measures. On more mezzo and micro levels social workers and development practitioners are adept at mobilising and linking people to local resources to provide short-term temporary relief to prevent hunger, suffering and starvation (Legerton and Castelloe, 1999). They make a difference by engaging people in income-generation programmes, by initiating social entrepreneurship projects (Lombard and Strydom, 2011) and by increasing human capabilities (Nussbaum, 2011; Sen, 1999). Social workers can contribute to poverty alleviation through developing, in collaboration with local communities, saving associations; micro enterprises, adult literacy; capacity-building that might enable people to access the open labour market; and day care centres and after-school care facilities that enable parents to work while providing early childhood stimulation and education (Midgley, 1996; Raheim, 1996).

Conclusion

Poverty is more than an economic issue. In a broader sense it reflects the denial of human capabilities, an assault on human dignity and integrity, lack of opportunities for development and a denial of fundamental rights. The multifaceted historical and contemporary internal and external factors contributing to Africa's poverty speak to the fact that the solutions are equally complex and need holistic approaches. Given the impact of structural constraints, especially neoliberal influences on the lives of the poor, there is a need for radical and greater system de-stabilising and social change efforts that must be supported by all sectors of society. As power tends to serve the interests of power, we cannot rely on the political elite and capitalist bureaucrats to deliver on human rights and social justice promises. We need the clamour and involvement of strong and vigilant civil society groupings as they serve as watchdogs for the poor. Social workers cannot advocate for and/or with the poor, whose fundamental rights are violated, by adopting *status quo*, system maintenance functions and practices that deny people rights to employment, food, health, social protection, security, education and life. Thus, there are calls (Dominelli, 2002; Sewpaul, 2006; Fergusson and Lavalette, 2006) in social work for the envisioning of another world based on social activism, popular people participation and emancipatory politics. Without these, it is hardly likely that we would make any real dents in poverty and achieve the MDG targets in the foreseeable future.

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A Developmental Perspective in Social Work Theory and Practice

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Introduction

Africa is still ranked at the bottom of human development reports (Kreitzer, 2012). Independence from colonialism brought political power, but this “power” is meaningless, since “it fails to bring food to the tables of millions of poor Africans” (Mashele, 2011, 77). Mbeki (2009) argues that political independence did not bring about economic transformation in Africa as it did in Asia, but entrenched economic inequalities inherited from colonialism. Furthermore, high indebtedness and aid dependence became two sides of the same coin – economic stagnation (Mbeki, 2009).

Sidelined by colonialism, Africans’ welfare was subordinate to that of colonialists, and African knowledge and skills were seen as inferior and consequently neglected (Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo, 2008). Power and politics thus play a central role in development. Green (2012, 17) warns that “[t]he interplay between individuals, families, communities, and states can open paths to rights, security, and prosperity, or it can condemn communities to vulnerability and poverty.” This implies that societal ills such as poverty may be “oppressive outcomes of pervasive inequality and injustice” (Mohan, 2012, 64) and that freedom can reach its fullest potential only in the presence of equality (Isbister, 2001). Unless people are protected from poverty and other hardships, they struggle to exercise their freedoms to pursue their goals (Isbister, 2001). Kreitzer (2012) asserts that social workers in Africa are caught between many different economic, political and social ideologies over which they have little control, for example, poverty alleviation programmes pursued in many African countries are constrained by national policies that are in turn restricted by global international financial institutions (IFIs) and their policies (Kreitzer, 2012). This is a critical premise for a development perspective in social work, which aims to promote equality, justice and freedom (Mohan, 1999 in Mohan, 2012).

This chapter discusses how a developmental perspective to social work, or “developmental social work” commits social workers to return to a social reform function. First, the macro framework for developmental social work is contextualised. Next, developmental social work is discussed, focusing on relevance and context. Then, interrelations between social justice, human rights and freedoms are presented

as the foundation for developmental social work. The relevance of advocacy practice in developmental social work is shown, followed by a discussion of capabilities, participation and empowerment. Social development is examined as a strategy and end goal for developmental social work. Then, the relevance of conflict, violence and peace for developmental social work is explored. The conclusion argues that developmental social work must promote social equality and human rights.

Macro framework for developmental social work

Capitalism in Africa, as elsewhere, is ruled by neoliberal globalisation, where finance and the economy together perpetuate a hugely unequal world which holds people captive, mentally and physically (George, 2010). Global capitalism or “neoliberalism” “is based on freedom for financial innovation, no matter where it may lead, and on privatisation, deregulation, unlimited growth, the free, supposedly self-regulating market and free trade”. (George, 2010, 10)

Mbeki (2009) believes that African political elites today sustain and reproduce themselves by perpetuating the neoliberal state and its attendant socioeconomic systems of exploitation, as devised by colonialists. Africa is de-industrialising and becoming more dependent on the export of raw materials (Mbeki, 2009). Furthermore, Africa is suffering an enormous brain drain and another scramble for natural resources, especially in East and West Africa, which may result in conflict on the continent, as already visible in the Niger Delta over petroleum and in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo over coltan (columbite-tantalite, which is used in devices such as cellular telephones) (Mbeki, 2009).

Neoliberalism restricts people’s freedom(s) and is hostile to social justice (Mohan, 2012), which implies imprisonment. George (2010, 3) contextualises the “prison” in which people live in two metaphors. The first is a series of concentric spheres in a hierarchy of diminishing importance, starting with the “outermost and most important”, namely *finances*. This is followed by the *economy*, then *society*, and lastly, in the “innermost and least important” sphere, the *planet*. In the second metaphor, she uses the image of walls to explain people’s captivity. In order of priority, the first wall is the *financial* and *economic* wall; the second is longstanding and increasing *poverty* and *inequality* in both the North and South; the third is *shrinking access to vital human necessities*, primarily food and water, and the final one is *climate change, destruction of nature and loss of biodiversity* (George, 2010). These “prisons” represent people’s “unfreedoms” (Sen, 1999) such as a lack of education, employment, or access to health services. Sen (1999) sees poverty as deprivation of basic capabilities which are the substantive freedom people have to choose how they want to live. These “prisons” or “unfreedoms” represent the areas where developmental social work is needed.

Finances and the economy assume power over human affairs. But when global finance is under stress, as in the recent financial crises, it damages not just the economy, but also society and the biosphere (George, 2010). George (2010, 4) further points out that the monetary economy has taken over, sidelining the real economy, and has “become virtually separate from it, while the real economy itself increasingly serves the needs of a

minority". Social workers have to understand this trend to be able to work towards social and economic inclusivity and freedom.

The challenge is to change the order or ranking of the spheres. George (2010, 3) explains:

The enormous task of people [including social workers] everywhere, an effort never before required in human history, is to reverse the order of these spheres so that it becomes exactly opposite to the existing one.

This implies that the primary concern, in the "outermost sphere" (ibid., 3) should be the finite *planet and its biosphere*, because the state of the earth ultimately encompasses and determines the state of all the other spheres. The next sphere should be *human society*, "which must respect the laws and the limits of the biosphere but should otherwise be free to choose democratically the social organization that best suits the needs of its members" (ibid., 3). Inside that would be the *economy*, which "would figure merely as one aspect of social life, providing for the production and distribution of the concrete means of society's existence; it should be subservient to, and chosen by, society so as to serve its needs". (ibid., 3) The innermost and least important sphere should be *finances*, seen as only one tool among many at the service of the economy. However, these spheres are concentric and hence intertwined. Developmental social work's mandate lies in its intervention at the points where people interact with their environment which includes various social systems and the natural, geographic environment which has a significant influence on the lives of people (IFSW, IASSW, 2013). Such a focus would be in line with the rationale for *The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development* (2012, 1), recognising "that the past and present political, economic, cultural and social orders, shaped in specific contexts, have unequal consequences for global, national and local communities and have negative impacts on people".

In line with George's (2010) suggested sequence of spheres, *The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development* (2012, 1) commits social workers and social development practitioners to creating a more socially just, fair world, by promoting social and economic equalities (society and economic spheres), promoting the dignity and worth of all people (society sphere), working towards environmental sustainability (planet sphere) and strengthening the recognition of the importance of human relationships (society sphere). A developmental perspective is appropriate for social work to have an impact on all these spheres (George, 2010) and hence on the injustices and inequalities that hold people captive.

Developmental social work

Social workers assist people to meet various needs – physical, mental, social and societal (Hoefler, 2012). This focus is still relevant if a developmental perspective to social work is adopted. However, from a social justice perspective, a developmental perspective does require a deliberate shift in approach(es), intervention methods, strategies and activities, along with a commitment to promoting social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people, as is suggested by the IFSW and IASSW's (2013) "Draft global definition of the social work profession". Individuals, families

and communities are exposed to injustices and risks of various kinds which require interventions ranging from protection at an individual level to addressing structural issues at a macro level.

Midgley (2010) points out that consensus on a single definition for developmental social work is unlikely, but several common themes constitute a developmental perspective for social work. These include social change and development, the use of strengths, empowerment and capacity enhancement, the notion of self-determination and client participation, and a commitment to equality and social justice.

The point of departure for developmental social work is being relevant and context-specific, for example, South Africa has adopted a development approach to social welfare and social work in its *White Paper for Social Welfare* (RSA, 1997) – a deliberate shift away from discriminatory practices to transform the sector in line with the new post-1994 democracy. Furthermore, from a human rights perspective, developmental social work includes sensitivity to diversity in all aspects of humanity (Gray and Allegritti, 2003, 322), emphasising the link between social justice, human rights and freedoms.

Social justice, human rights and freedoms

Injustices such as oppression and discrimination run counter to human rights values (Ife, 2012) and underscore entrenched unfreedoms which dehumanise people (Mohan, 2012). In the context of empowerment and liberation, promoting social change and justice, it is essential that developmental social work recognises the direct link between social justice, human rights and freedoms.

Social justice is defined in *The Social Work Dictionary* (Barker, 2003 in Hoefer, 2012, 29) as “an ideal condition in which all members of a society have the same basic rights, protections, opportunities, obligations, and social benefits”. This implies freedom to choose, access to services and benefit in all spheres of development and well-being. Social, environmental, economic and political justice are related. The connection between social and environmental justice is obvious, in the “inequitable share of environmental ills that poor communities and communities of colour live with”, where poverty is a central indicator (Schlossberg, 2007, 55). Environmental justice, for example, relating to contaminated water, is not only an individual experience, but is embedded in communities (Schlossberg, 2007). Economic justice includes the right to work and to earn a living wage, food, free education, the right to safe and healthy housing, and the right to medical care (Cowger, 1989). Cowger (1989) points out that the structural injustice of multinational companies’ setting up factories in Africa to exploit cheap and controlled labour and to harvest natural resources violates poor people’s rights. Unjust economies generate vast inequalities which make society unjust (George, 2010). Political justice includes a say for all people in the decision-making mechanisms of a society and protection against hardships (Cowger, 1989).

Sen (1999) lists five types of freedom, which he also sees as distinct types of rights and opportunities, namely: political freedom, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees (need for openness, trust) and protective security (safety nets).

Political and civil freedoms are essential elements of human freedom (Sen, 1999). Freedom can reach its fullest potential only in the presence of equality (Isbister, 2001), which is a human right. Developmental social work is thus embedded in a human rights approach which includes first generation rights (civil and political rights such as freedom of speech and conscience, and freedom from torture and arbitrary detention), second generation rights (the right to adequate income, income security and standard of living; adequate shelter and housing; an adequate standard of health care; education; and meaningful work) and third generation rights (the rights of the natural world, species biodiversity and inter-generational equity) (Ife, 2012). These rights include both individual and collective rights, which are mutually reinforcing and interdependent. This implies that seeing social work as a human rights profession has consequences for how social work is conceptualised and practised (Ife, 2012). It reinforces and validates traditional understandings and practices of social work. Simultaneously, it challenges some assumptions of the social work profession, providing a strong basis for “an assertive practice that seeks to realise the social justice goals of social workers, in whatever setting” (Ife, 2012, 6). Therefore, a human rights approach provides a framework for a developmental perspective in social work, as it is inclusive of micro and macro practice. It validates traditional practices of social work and at the same time searches for innovative and cultural relevant practices in various settings in its mission to promote social justice. Advocacy practice provides such a framework.

Advocacy practice

Advocacy involves dealing with client problems at micro, mezzo and macro levels (Hoefler, 2012). Developmental social work focuses on the micro-macro practice continuum in line with advocacy practice’s view that the “personal is political” (Isbister, 2001, 166). The micro-macro practice link in developmental social work is important – traditional social work should not be abandoned, but integrated in a relevant way. Isbister (2001, 166) explains that when an individual or a family is exposed to exploitation, subordination and the unjustified use of power, “it is important for all involved to understand the system in which they are enmeshed, how the system relates to the wider society, and how it can be reformulated”. In advocacy practice, injustice can also be addressed directly at the macro level.

Advocacy practice pursues social justice. It is defined as:

...that part of practice where the social worker takes action in a systematic and purposeful way to defend, represent, or otherwise advance the cause of one or more clients at the individual, group, organizational, or community level in order to promote social justice. (Hoefler, 2012, 2)

This definition emphasises “doing for” the community and advancing people’s cause at various levels. Advocacy practice involves capacity-building and empowerment. It is relevant to developmental social work because it is in line with a generalist, problem-solving approach to social work; it engages with the political and the power(s) which affect individuals and society, and aims at higher levels of service beneficiaries’ empowerment (Hoefler, 2012). It also overturns perceptions of politics and advocacy as “an unpleasant

domain” often found in social work (Hoefer, 2012, 25). Advocacy can improve clients’ situations, because their ideas are represented in policy-making circles. Social workers have specialised knowledge about the human condition and a belief that service provision must be accommodated in people’s environment. They focus on service users’ strengths rather than pathology, and present decision-makers with fresh and important views (Hoefer, 2012). Advocacy practice bridges traditional and developmental social work practice through “adopting social investment strategies that build on people’s capabilities to be productive citizens and lead normal and fulfilling lives” (Midgley and Conley, 2010, xvi). Although some social workers find “this notion troubling ... developmental social work’s commitments are not, in fact, incompatible with social work values – particularly with a commitment to human rights and social justice” (Midgley and Conley, 2010, xvi). Advocacy practice in developmental social work focuses on individuals, families and communities by asking how they would like to be helped through building on their capabilities and strengths. Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo (2008) mention the example of working in a rural area – the social worker should apply his/her skills to encourage participation by involving the family or the elders in finding a solution for an individual in need. Another example is where, in the case of referral, the social worker should know when matters have to be referred back to the extended family, as in the case of family violence and child care (Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo, 2008). In this context, culturally relevant developmental social work is “not so much about independence, self-determination and individual rights but more about collective self-determination and rights, mutual cooperation, obligation and responsibility, and social and economic inclusion” (Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo, 2008, 217).

Sadly, the reality is that rural communities are suffering due to a lack of resources and high levels of inequality and poverty which have eroded the extended family’s capacity to provide support to individuals and families (Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo, 2008). The fact that the extended family and community get involved does not reduce the State’s responsibility to provide equal access to services such as education and health. Politicians and governments often claim that injustices will be addressed once resources are available, but continue to spend tax revenue on luxuries from which they personally benefit at the cost of the people. Isbister (2001, 18) refers to making the best of the limited resources available as a component of justice, namely “efficiency”. Although resources may indeed be limited, it reinforces people’s captivity in a wall of poverty and inequality if they believe that they should be satisfied with the crumbs of the allocation of resources which are unfairly distributed in the first place. Cowger (1989) rightly argues that minimal standards of justice mandate that, in a world of sufficient resources (cf. George, 2010), no human being should die of hunger or curable disease, be without safe housing and adequate clothing, or lack access to employment and education. Unfortunately these are the realities of millions of people living in Africa and hence the challenges that social workers are confronted with in these contexts. It is inherent to advocacy practice that people take responsibility for building their capabilities in order to stand up for their rights.

People participation, capabilities and empowerment

Developmental social work emphasises giving a voice to people to engage in and influence their own development. Citizens need institutions that facilitate cooperation, and leaders who ensure that these institutions function and deliver on expectations (Mbeki, 2009). Social workers can provide such leadership. In the context of promoting social justice and human rights, empowerment must be targeted at the personal, community and political level to break the financial power of political elites. Fundamental change requires popular action (George, 2010).

People's right to socioeconomic development is related to notions of citizenship, participation and power (Green, 2012). The assertion of power is a crucial kind of freedom and "a means to ensure that the different institutions of society (state, the market, the community, and the family) respect people's rights and meet their needs, via laws, rules, policies and day-to-day activities" (Green, 2012, 18).

All rights are related to responsibilities, which form part of the moral connections and obligations that bind society (Green, 2012). To act on responsibilities, people need capabilities. For Sen and Nussbaum (in Schlossberg, 2007), participation is a key political capability for individuals to ensure functioning. A key aspect of developmental social work is that people believe that they have a say in the decision-making mechanisms of a society and are protected against hardships (Cowger, 1989). This is a vast challenge for developmental social work to assist with building human capability, which is key to social and economic freedom (Sen, 1999). Developmental social work is instrumental in raising people's consciousness on matters that keep them in captivity (such as ignorance), and in encouraging them to attain their freedom by exercising their right to information. George (2010) argues that people are often unaware of their potential power. Mashele (2011, 125) is very vocal on the "intellectual desert" of Africans based on ignorance and a poor education system, exploited by politicians who thrive on the ignorance of the masses. He envisages a liberal revolution that is "a merciless assault on ignorance" (Mashele, 2011, 125) and should

... be preceded by an open acknowledgement that the "worst enemy" of the African people is ignorance. Ignorance keeps ordinary Africans in social, political and economic bondage that makes it impossible to break out of poverty and underdevelopment. Ignorance creates limits where there should be none; it imposes fears that should never exist, and renders real possibilities unreachable. Therefore, the freeing of the mind of an African must be the first priority in the kind of liberal-revolutionary change that we foresee. (ibid., 129)

The consequences of ignorance are very relevant for developmental social work as Mashele (2011, 133) asserts that ignorance:

... is very dangerous for social cohesion; it nibbles away at the heart of an active citizenry. When people feel and think that they have no power to change their socio-political conditions, they resign themselves to all manner of self-destructive behaviour.

From a developmental perspective, social workers have a frontline responsibility to continuously raise citizens' consciousness so that they can break free from ignorance and become informed on injustices and their rights, and can then engage in capacity-

building and empowerment activities. This will enable people, including the poor, to take up their responsibility towards themselves (personal) and their communities (political), and become powerful individuals and organisations that hold leaders and governments accountable for their responsibility in constructing a society built on equity and fairness (Green, 2012). Social workers should prepare citizens to claim their rights and understand that breaking out of ignorance is the first step in cracking the wall of inequality. The next step is moving towards independence from the political elite through an inclusive economy. Social work's commitment to social development is a path towards this end.

Social development and developmental social work

Social development originated in Africa (Midgley, 1995) and is gaining significant ground on the continent as context-relevant social work practice (Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo, 2008). In line with George's (2010) cycle metaphor, social work's involvement in social development covers three spheres, the planet, society and the economy.

Social development is directly linked to development social work's focus on poverty and inequality; hence, social workers' role in promoting socioeconomic rights. It emphasises the "human freedoms" focus of development which requires the removal of sources of unfreedom, such as poverty and oppression, poor economic opportunities and systematic social deprivation (Sen, 1999, 3). Extreme poverty equals *economic* unfreedom, which in turn, breeds *social* unfreedom (Sen, 1999). Being at the coalface of poverty and injustices, social workers have an obligation to engage in activities that will end poverty. In adopting *The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development* (2012), social work is committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and, in particular, developing the post-2015 development agenda. Isbister (2001) argues that, as the economy becomes more global, so must the responses to it, if we are to make progress towards a just world. Inequality is about people not having equal access to the goods and services provided by their economies, as their incomes are vastly unequal (Isbister, 2001). Social workers face the injustices of this inequality daily, and cannot promote social justice without directly engaging in economic activities that work towards an inclusive economic system.

An inclusive economic system will not automatically emerge by bringing an end to capitalism. What is needed is:

...an ongoing process of transformation fuelled by constant public pressure – local, national and, when possible, international – that forces governments to rein in the private sector, particularly the financial conglomerates, and put people and the planet ahead of accumulation and profit in a far more cooperative social context. (George, 2010, 9)

As social work joins international efforts in this transformation process, such as *The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development* (2012), it can only be successful if it is strengthened by local and national efforts in breaking the dominant sphere of the financial power elite (George, 2010). However, to encourage and prepare people to participate in the transformation process to bring about social change, social workers must understand what they can do in the context where they work. That includes knowing the truth about what the captivities are that exclude people from the economy and keep them trapped in inequalities.

Towards this end, it is important for social work to understand the relevance of markets in social development activities. As with capitalism, abolishing the markets is also not a solution (George, 2010). Most non-capitalist economic systems have made extensive use of the market, so the claim that the market is the “defining feature of capitalism” is going too far (Isbister, 2001, 36) – markets do not necessarily imply capitalism, but capitalism implies markets. In a capitalist system, markets are indeed “mighty engines”, generating wealth and transforming people’s lives and expectations throughout society, while excluding poor people, exacerbating long-term inequality, and degrading the natural world all people depend on (Green, 2012, 87). Sen (1999) warns against seeing the place of the market mechanism only in derivative terms, referring to Adam Smith, who noted that freedom of exchange and transaction is in itself a basic liberty that people have reason to value. There is some social loss involved in denying people the right to interact economically with each other (Sen, 1999).

Thus, society needs a market channelled for the purposes of a just society. Therefore, the debate is not about “saying yes or no to the market but rather on which goods ought to be bought and sold with prices fixed according to supply and demand and which ones should be treated as public or common goods and services, the latter priced according to their social usefulness” (George, 2010, 14). Governments can be forced to explore other alternatives beyond a market that only benefits the political elite, and to include benefit to the majority. A major challenge in overcoming colonial bureaucracy is putting mechanisms in place to give people an effective voice in running their civil affairs. One mechanism adopted in some African countries was organising government at a local level and involving families and communities more extensively in meeting their own social and economic needs (Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo, 2008).

In the context of sustainable social development, social work’s engagement in promoting economic activities such as income generation projects, small businesses and social entrepreneurship (Lombard and Strydom, 2011) should not be separated from social work’s responsibility to promote environmental justice and development. Prioritising the planet (including the climate and environment) as the first sphere for development in breaking the wall of poverty and inequality (George, 2010), shifts the focus to the most basic of resources, food and water, which are diminishing for millions of people (George, 2010). Moreover, recycling has become a major industry ensuring survival for many. Everyone’s well-being depends on the climate (George, 2010), strengthening social efforts to intensify recycling (witness school awareness campaigns and the reliance of people in informal markets, including the poor, on recycling for food security). Developmental social work’s focus on the environment is relevant because it protects and grows resources, enhancing social development, social stability and conflict or peace. In this regard, George (2010, 171) cites a Pentagon report arguing that “[r]esource access, ‘not religion, ideology or national honour’, will become the prime mover of war”.

Developmental social work, conflict and peace

Economic and political equality, justice and peace, are linked, as are injustice, conflict and violence (Cowger, 1989; Sanders, 1989). Poverty and growing impoverishment result

in conflict over scarce, shrinking resources, exacerbating a never-ending cycle of violent conflict in Africa (Mbeki, 2009). Green (2012) explains that many conflicts are born of felt grievances and rooted in longstanding inequalities, and can only be resolved with measures that address the roots of discontent. Causal connections between war, injustice, oppression, poverty, and underdevelopment are prevalent at every level – the family, the community, the state, and the international arena (Sanders, 1989). Violence against women and children cuts across all levels, from within their own homes to national and international levels. During armed conflict, violence against women takes on a particularly horrifying “dimension when armies use mass rape and sexual enslavement as weapons of war” (Green, 2012, 230) – a strategy that “kills and scars women, and inflicts deep psychological wounds on entire communities” (Green, 2012, 230). These deep psychological scars, brokenness and trauma extend to the wider society, in that the perpetrators destroy “social cohesion by impregnating women so that they bear the children of the enemy”. Women who survive such trauma are often stigmatised and rejected by their own families and communities (Green, 2012). Children’s rights are violated in many ways, for example, when children are recruited or conscripted as child soldiers (Green, 2012).

Conflict and violence prevail, and peace fails in the presence of underdevelopment, injustice, oppression, exploitation, poverty, resentment, and hatred in people’s lives and denial of people’s right to self-determination (Sanders, 1989) – all issues social workers work with daily. This is particularly relevant for social work in developing countries where political violence is as deeply entrenched as poverty and inequality (Green, 2012). Arguably, violence promises lasting solutions or human emancipation and freedom in some countries, but the fear is that “it could overtake us unless we can quickly reduce the glaring injustices of the present.” (George, 2010, 13)

Given that competition for scarce resources (especially water and food) is likely to increase in unequal societies (George, 2010) and that “[c]onflict both feeds and is fed by inequality” (Green, 2012, 229), it is clear that social work has a role to play in promoting justice through peace-making activities. In developing countries, development has been the central core of peace thinking (Sanders, 1989), and social workers should resolve to contribute to developing a world society “geared to life rather than to death” (Sanders, 1989, 13). This implies advocacy of peace and justice which Sanders (1989, 79) proposes as “criteria for legitimate development grounded in ethical and moral principles”. Developmental social work meets these criteria with its focus on social justice, human rights and social change. The only lasting peace is a “just peace” based on respect for human rights and mutuality in relationship (Brock-Utne, 1977 in Sanders, 1989, 6). Social work should thus engage in the struggle for peace, which involves condemning all forms of oppression, discrimination, exploitation and domination, nationally and internationally (Sanders, 1989). However, social workers should note that in practice there is no neat dividing line between war and peace (Green, 2012). When civil wars end, there is often a proliferation of gangs, kidnappings, and other forms of violent crime, often involving demobilised soldiers and police (Green, 2012).

Developmental activities include social work's engagement in activities such as conflict management, grassroots action and the empowerment of women and other deprived groups (Sanders, 1989). This includes making people aware of their rights. Vulnerable groups, especially children, should know and act on their rights to gain hope and freedom to make choices about their future and build their self-esteem (Green, 2012) which, in turn, will strengthen their capabilities and opportunities for inclusion in society.

Violence, like other sources of insecurity, requires action on many fronts, especially building an effective and accountable State and empowering individuals and communities at risk, including poor people, women, and socially excluded groups, such as ethnic and religious minorities (Green, 2012). Vulnerable people must understand and be empowered to stand up against injustices – if they do not, they remain captive in the inequality and poverty. This implies taking ownership of their freedom. George (2010, 13) warns: "It's tempting for people who are hurting to blame scapegoats such as immigrants, rather than the real culprits, who are too far away to provide easy targets."

The fact that the "primary responsibility for addressing violence and armed conflict and for alleviating the suffering it causes rests with national governments" (Green, 2012, 233) does not mean that national governments will shoulder this responsibility, or will do so in the best interests of all. Communities must take responsibility for protecting themselves and be an active citizenry who will use democracy as an "effective antidote" to war, and encourage leaders to find political rather than military answers to differences" (Green, 2012, 233). Developmental social work must help "societies torn apart by social, economic, or political exclusion" (Green, 2012, 234) to understand that they collectively have the power to mobilise action to influence governments to achieve peace by seeking, and finding, genuine political solutions. This is a preferred route in view of the encouraging trends in recent years where most conflicts that are in fact resolved, are resolved peacefully (Green, 2012).

Implications for social work education

Kreitzer (2012) avers that social work in Africa has to find its own unique style of training and practice to become an influential force for change in Africa. However, relevance and context specificity does not imply that social work students in Africa should not be trained for international social work practice (Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo, 2008).

Developmental social work requires connectedness with the local, national and international environment. Midgley and Conley (2010) acknowledge that many social workers are involved in various development activities for which they have received little, if any, training. In the new dispensation, social work educators and practitioners must modify and redefine theory and knowledge to redress social injustice, poverty and racism (Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo, 2008). Social work education should emphasise training in theoretical models for emancipatory, transformational and social structural practice (Midgley, 2010), including radical social work. Furthermore, training should prepare students for advocacy practice, which is currently re-emerging as a force in both education and practice (Haynes, 2012); for their social change role in social, economic

and environmental development; for dealing with conflict, violence and peace, and empowering and liberating excluded or marginalised groups.

Conclusion

If social work wants to remain relevant in a rapidly changing society and true to its core value and purpose of promoting social justice and human rights, a developmental perspective is crucial. Social work must return to its social change function and engage in advocacy practice, challenging structural and power issues at a macro level to break down poverty and inequality. It must build bridges between the macro/political and the micro/individual levels to ensure that communities, individuals and families are empowered and liberated to participate in their own development. In traditional social work, a developmental perspective requires social work interventions through the lens of theories and approaches that will empower individuals and families to deal with social ills that affect them at a personal and community level. Developmental social work primarily seeks “to foster community living and participation in economic and social activities” (Midgley and Conley, 2010, 201), and it responds to those needing long-term services by finding a balance between social work’s remedial, maintenance, preventive, integrative, and developmental functions.

Using George’s (2010) cycle metaphor, developmental social work can channel the profession’s contribution to fighting injustices and inequalities towards collaboration in international, regional and national initiatives promoting social change, social justice and inclusion, relating, in order of importance, to the planet, society and the economy. Social workers must understand how political elites and economic powers that decide how society will function affect social reform (George, 2010). By breaking down ignorance about how the world works and is shaped, social workers can promote social justice and human rights by mobilising communities and individuals towards empowerment and liberation.

The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development (2012) provides a platform for developmental social work to engage with the unequal consequences for global, national and local communities and to shape the development context for social and economic freedom. George (2010) claims that democracy is the one common element that enables people to alter their present circumstances. However, democracy cannot be substantive where ignorance is rife (Mashele, 2011). Thus, information is the key to empowerment and liberation. A commitment to a developmental perspective can unfetter social work to become a key role player in the ongoing struggle for a socially just and fair world.

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Gender Perspectives in Poverty Reduction and Social Development

Janestic M. Twikirize

Introduction

Gender is widely acknowledged as an integral aspect of development. It is impossible to achieve social development without addressing the issue of gender equality. Official development reports such as the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) human development reports have, besides the human development index, included a gender equality index to provide a more realistic view of countries' levels of human development (see for example, UNDP, 2013). It has further been asserted that gender equality and women's empowerment have large multiplier effects on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and are perhaps one of the most important linkages across the MDGs (UNDP, 2010). Key indicators of social development, including the level of income, employment, educational attainment, access to health care, the health status of the population, and availability and access to social protection, become more meaningful if they are considered from a gender perspective. Conversely, social development goals, including poverty eradication, cannot be achieved without addressing gender inequality. Poverty is not just a lack of sufficient income to meet basic needs but a condition and position of social exclusion, isolation, powerlessness, low self-dignity and generally an absence of basic capabilities for an acceptable level of functioning in society (UNDP, 1997; Sen, 1999; World Bank, 2001; Wordofa, 2004). Poverty reduction is one of the primary objectives and key aspects of achieving social development. The goal of social development is the promotion of social welfare for all people in a given society (Midgley, 1995).

In this chapter, the rationale for a gender perspective in poverty reduction and social development is provided and the efforts that have been taken towards gender equality, as well as the current gaps and challenges are discussed with particular reference to East Africa. Finally, the role that social work can play in promoting gender equality is highlighted. As a first step, a review of key concepts related to gender is presented.

Gender, gender equality and development

Gender has been popularly defined in terms of the socially constructed differences between men and women; or the culturally determined roles that define men and women (cf. Midgley, 1995; Parpart, Connelly and Barriteau, 2000; World Bank, 2001). The concept is quite often used to underscore the unequal relationships between men and women particularly with regard to resource distribution, responsibilities and power. It is on the basis of gender, and not sex, that women's subordination and ultimate disadvantage in society is interpreted. These socially constructed positions and roles and the consequent characteristics imposed on women and men have to be taken into account in development in general and poverty reduction programmes in particular.

Gender and development debates usually focus on women because they have, for a long time, occupied a subordinate position in society and have suffered marginalisation by virtue of that position (USAID, 2010). Initial development efforts (particularly during the colonial era in Africa) focused on modernising societies through adoption of Western values and technologies (Connelly *et al.*, 2000). The goal was economic growth and the underlying philosophy was that the benefits of this growth would 'trickle down' to the population on the margins of society. Development was also biased in favour of men in terms of training, employment and control of benefits of development, until the 1970s, when under pressure from the feminist movements¹, deliberate steps were taken to integrate gender in development (*ibid.*).

Different concepts have evolved over time with regard to gender in development. The initial concepts used were Women in Development (WID) and Women and Development (WAD) which underscored women's needs and integration in development, and women's productive roles, respectively. An alternative concept of Gender and Development (GAD) emerged in the 1980s with a major emphasis on women's empowerment (Connelly *et al.*, 2000) and as a response to the perceived marginalisation of women from the economic development process (Singh, 2007). The GAD perspective promotes the incorporation of the social construction of gender into development (Singh, 2007); recognises the differential impacts of development policies and practices on women and men; and considers women as agents and not just recipients of development benefits. From this perspective, it is argued that women's status in society is not only affected by their material conditions of life but also their position in the national, regional and global economies (Connelly *et al.*, 2000). Therefore women's empowerment is the major tool to gender equality. Empowerment is about people taking control of their lives and this involves setting their own agendas, gaining skills, building self-confidence, solving problems and developing self-confidence, developing self-reliance and expressing their voice (UNECA, 2008). A related concept is gender mainstreaming which refers to the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. According to Derbyshire (2002, cited in

¹ In the United States of America, under pressure from the feminist movement, the Percy Amendment Bill of 1973 required gender-sensitive social impact studies for all USAID projects in order to integrate women into the national economies of the recipient countries and create equal opportunities for both genders (Parpart, Connelly and Barriteau, 2000, 57)

Zuckerman, 2002, 8), gender mainstreaming changes the focus of interventions from women as a target group to gender analysis of women's and men's roles and relations as part of the planning process and to gender equality as a goal.

For poverty reduction, this implies assessing planned programmes and specific interventions to ensure that they address the unique needs of women and men and the conditions that especially disadvantage women such as their disproportionate involvement in unremunerated subsistence work.

Rationale for a gender perspective in poverty reduction and social development

Gender is recognised not just as a development concept but a significant analytical tool like other traditional variables of age, race, locality and other factors (Reddock, 2000, cited in Parpart, Connelly and Barribeau, 2000, 37). Gender equality and women's empowerment are development objectives in their own right, as embodied in Millennium Development Goal 3. If development is about expanding freedoms for all (Sen, 1999), then gender equality as a development objective cannot be overstated. The rationale for this gender perspective is based on a number of factors including but not limited to the following:

First, gender has a strong influence on how individuals experience their reality. The nature, causes and impacts of poverty often differ for men and women based too often, on the gendered aspects of capability, opportunity, security and empowerment (Government of Uganda [GoU], 2006). For example, educational achievements of boys and girls are not just dependent upon their intellectual abilities or the class of schools and institutions attended but also on their gendered identities. How society defines males and females and the roles assigned to them on the basis of their being male or female will affect their performance in school. For example, whereas universal primary education is a key social development programme, it may fail to produce the desired result just because the unique needs of girls and boys were ignored in planning. As a result, young girls may continue to drop out of school even when education is free and apparently universal. For example, only one third of girls who enrol in primary education in Uganda continue in school up to the age of 18 compared to a half of the boys (Uganda Bureau of Statistics [UBOS], 2010) with factors responsible for this ranging from early pregnancy and marriage, sexual harassment, cultural practices, particularly female genital mutilation, and lack of proper sanitation facilities in schools (GoU, 2010). This relates to all other aspects of individuals' lives and experiences including poverty and well-being.

Second, women comprise a half of the world's human population (Population Reference Bureau, 2009) and are, therefore, a significant population group whose needs and agency cannot be ignored in development. Many authors (Snyder and Tadesse, 1995, cited in Connelly *et al.*, 2000; UNDP, 2010; World Bank, 2001) contend that development goals cannot be fully realised without the participation of women. Women make a substantial contribution to development and should equally use the benefits of development to enhance their well-being. Social development programmes that do not critically take into account the population structure within a country will fail to effectively address the specific needs of each population group (Pan American Health Organisation [PHO], 2005).

Third, gender inequality increases poverty not only at the individual level but at the household and broader societal levels as well (Cagatay, 1998; Graham, 1996; Onyejekwe, 2002; UNDP, 1997). Limited girl-child education, teenage pregnancies, early marriages and high fertility rates are some of the gender-related factors that perpetuate chronic poverty. The significance of gender in social development has been underscored over the years in several publications even predating the era of MDGs. For example, the 1997 human development report (UNDP, 1997) showed a direct linkage between gender inequality and poverty; clearly indicating that countries which had the lowest gender development index also ranked lowest in the human poverty index while countries with a higher gender development index had a correspondingly higher human development index. In 2001, the World Bank in a policy research paper (*Engendering development*) identified gender inequality as a significant obstacle to economic growth in Africa; while another UNDP report, published ten years after the launch of the MGDs, acknowledged the enormous multiplier effects of gender equality on the achievement of the MGDs (UNDP, 2010). Gender equality can enhance economic efficiency and improve other development outcomes by removing barriers that prevent women and men from having the same access to education, economic opportunities, and productive inputs that can generate broad gains (World Bank, 2012). It also promotes the participation of women in decision-making and management roles, which are critical to sustainable development. Hence, gender equality, although important in its own right, has to be taken seriously because of its implications for effective poverty reduction and social development efforts.

Fourth, the argument that women are poorer than men – what is referred to as the “feminisation of poverty” (Cagatay, 1998) – underlies calls for gender-aware and gender-sensitive poverty reduction and social development strategies and programmes. Because of the cultural and traditional position of women in many societies, they are more often at a disadvantage. Their freedom, choices and rights are often restricted (Parpart, Connelly and Barribeau, 2000) and they are easily neglected in development. Their experience of poverty is mediated by social relations of gender (GoU, 2006). In Uganda, subsequent household surveys indicate that women are disproportionately affected by poverty, with average incomes as well as the consumption expenditures of female-headed households persistently lower than those of male-headed households (UBOS, 2006; 2010). Women similarly own less property, have less education, poorer health outcomes, participate less in governance and engage in work that is largely unremunerated and invisible despite significantly contributing to development (cf. World Bank, 2012). Women’s disproportionate experience of poverty in East Africa, as in many other sub-Saharan African countries, is attributed to their limited access to and control over productive resources, opportunities and services as well as their low representation in decision-making both at the macro and micro levels (Cagatay, 1998).

Gender inequality and social development: Illustrations from East Africa

Gender inequalities in the division of labour, access to and control over resources and income, condition and position in society, decision-making as well as exclusion from

economic and political spheres are some of the factors that need to be taken into account for gender-sensitive social development programming. These aspects and their implications for gender inequality are next discussed using illustrations from East Africa.

Gendered division of labour and type of work: Women's triple roles

Gendered division of labour refers to the allocation of roles and responsibilities to men and women, the nature of the work done by each category and the value that is attached to it. The type of work can either be reproductive, productive, or community work (Moffart *et al.*, 1991, cited in Connelly *et al.*, 2000). Reproductive roles include child-bearing and -rearing as well as other roles revolving around the home. Productive roles refer to work that is done for remuneration such as formal employment; while community work or community management roles refer to work that supports collective consumption and maintenance of community resources. In most societies, women do much of the reproductive work in addition to their roles in productive and community work (Connelly *et al.*, 2000). Besides this, the production role is almost always more valued than the reproductive role and, as argued by Chhachhi and Truong (2009, 3):

...by valuing the production of things more than the reproduction of human life, this construct has buffeted both class and masculinised power and operates as a gender based mechanism of selection and exclusion for voice and participation.

Division of labour, and more generally employment, is critical in gender-sensitive poverty programming because it determines access to financial resources which in turn help the subordinate gender to gain some level of autonomy and decision-making power (PHO, 2005). Employment can be a source of empowerment for both men and women especially if individuals are in control of their earned income. However, increasing women's access to employment without other forms of empowerment will not automatically give them control over financial resources. In a number of cases in sub-Saharan Africa, it is not unusual to find that the control of a woman's earnings, even among the elite, is vested with the male partner. This perpetuates unequal power relations based on gender.

Unequal division of labour is also reflected in the sectors in which the majority of women or men are employed. In East Africa, women constitute not less than 70% of the agricultural labour force and yet, despite their enormous contribution, most of them neither enjoy the proceeds of their labour nor do the majority of them own productive resources such as land (Eastern Africa Sub-regional Initiative for the Advancement of Women [EASSI], 2010). Conversely, women are under-represented in formal employment. In Uganda, for example, only 37% of public and 29% of private formal workers are women (UBOS, 2010). Another example refers to Kenya where 99% and 91% of the persons operating construction and transport enterprises, respectively, are men (EASSI, 2010) – reflecting a severe under-representation of women in more paying sectors. The gender disparities in employment and earnings are attributed to low educational attainment for women and the disproportionate demands linked to their triple roles of reproduction, production and community work.

A gender perspective in poverty reduction should consider how the different roles affect women's and men's needs, position and productivity and chart out appropriate ways

of causing positive changes. Cagatay (1998) suggests that deliberate strategies need to be adopted to redistribute the burden of reproductive labour towards men in order to reduce women's "time poverty", which refers to the constraints that women face in terms of time due to their many roles, which in turn affect their participation in more productive ventures.

Access to and control over resources and benefits

The subordinate position of women often results in their having less access to and control over resources. Access connotes the ability to use a given resource, while control implies that a person has the power to make crucial decisions concerning the given resource, including whether or not to dispose of such a resource. Gender inequality in ownership of economic resources such as land fundamentally perpetuates poverty and vulnerability (Nabbumba, 2008). In almost all communities in East Africa, women may have access to land for food production but they lack control over this land. Subsequently, they may not be able to use this resource as collateral to access a loan for purchase of modern farming equipment. Even when the land is profitably utilised and there is a bumper harvest, the woman may not control the financial benefits accruing from the sale of produce and, hence, will remain in poverty although national statistics may generally show an increase in household incomes. The limited control over land by women is perpetuated by tradition and a culture that associates land ownership with masculinity. Limited control over productive resources has been identified as a key obstacle to women's socioeconomic development (Africa Development Bank, 2010). In view of this, power relations between men and women need to be continuously addressed in order to increase women's control over resources, decision-making and other affairs that affect their lives.

Condition and position

The *condition* of women and men is often influenced by their respective *positions* in society. Condition refers to the material state such as poor health, gender-based violence and abuse, lack of basic necessities for a decent living, and general destitution; often related to short term practical needs of individuals and their households such as decent shelter, food, clothing and other material resources (Connelly *et al.*, 2000). Health as a defining aspect of the condition of men and women is intricately interwoven with poverty and in this regard, serious gender disparities become apparent. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, women and girls comprise 60% of all people living with HIV/aids and young females aged 15 to 24 are eight times more likely than males to be HIV positive (UNAIDS, 2010). Gender inequality in other social development spheres such as education, employment, earnings and decision-making, particularly within households, significantly contribute to poor health outcomes for women (Ellis, Manuel and Blackden, 2006). Other factors relate to power imbalances between men and women which are reflected in the control of resources, health care seeking decisions, gender-based violence, and harmful sociocultural norms and practices. Women disproportionately suffer gender-based violence and more often than not, men are the perpetrators. In Uganda, the number of women victims of domestic violence is more than three times higher than men (UBOS, 2006). Violence

against women negatively affects their mental and physical well-being and affects their productivity. Other forms of violence such as female genital mutilation, prevalent in a couple of communities in East Africa, are wrapped in culture and yet, apart from the physical and emotional pain suffered, these practices drive young girls into early marriages, dropping out of school, pre-occupation with reproductive roles and a perpetual cycle of poverty from one generation to the next.

The *position* of women refers to their social and economic standing relative to that of men. Key indicators of position include male-female disparities in wages and employment, participation in legislative bodies, and vulnerability to poverty and violence. The position of women is regarded as a strategic, long-term interest that must be addressed for sustainable change in their social condition and in order to help them participate fully as agents of development and social change (Connelly *et al.*, 2000). Empowering women to have greater access to resources and more equal participation in decision-making can improve their *position* in society and subsequently help them out of *conditions* of poverty and vulnerability compared to targeting them with short-term benefits for their immediate needs.

Participation in decision-making

Participation of both women and men at different levels of decision-making is important for formulation of more gender-sensitive policies. Including men and women in politics and decision-making positions means that issues of both sexes receive a shared attention, theoretically resulting in the formulation of better policies. Key indicators of participation include the proportion of women in parliament and other decision-making bodies in government, and local government positions filled by men and women (PHO, 2005). Recent statistics on participation in decision-making in East Africa are indicated in Table 5.1 below. Wordofa (2004) observes that exclusion from decision-making prevents individuals from receiving equal recognition and from exercising their fundamental human rights and freedoms and that these processes of social exclusion perpetuate poverty and vulnerability.

International, regional and national frameworks for the promotion of gender equality

Gender has been on the development agenda for more than half a century. In Africa, the seeds of gender and development were sown in the 1950s and 1960s after women who had been involved in the struggle for independence began to agitate for continued participation in building their nations instead of leaving the full task to the men (Parpart, Connelly and Barriteau, 2000). The United Nations declaration of 1975 as the International Women's Year and 1976 to 1985 as the Decade for Women strengthened the position of gender and development on the society's agenda. Further steps were taken by the UN to establish an institutional framework for these efforts with the establishment of the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the International Research and Training Institute for

the Advancement of Women in 1976². Other significant milestones in the struggle for gender equality include, among others: the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development³, the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action⁴, the 2000 UN Millennium Declaration⁵, and the 2005 UN World Summit⁶; all of which underscored the importance of and made commitments to mainstream gender in development.

At the regional level, gender equality is enshrined in the founding instrument of the African Union (AU) and in the 1981 African Charter on Human and People's Rights. In 2003, Africa heads of states adopted the Protocol on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa; and in 2003 the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa was adopted during the AU Heads of State Summit in Addis Ababa (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa [UNECA], 2008) with commitments made to accelerate the integration and promotion of gender equality in socioeconomic and political development. Other regional frameworks for gender equality in development include the AU's New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (2001) and many other sub-regional economic commissions including the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), Intergovernmental Authority on Development in Eastern Africa (IGAD) and the East African Community (EAC). The 2008 SADC Gender and Development Protocol, for example, is a legally binding instrument to accelerate action towards gender equality; while the IGAD Gender Policy underscores the need to engender development in the region (UNECA, 2008). The AU Gender Policy (2009) provides the mandate for the operationalisation of the many commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment on the continent (African Union, 2009).

All the countries within the East African Community are signatories to international and regional protocols on gender equality; particularly the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the MDGs. Gender equality is also enshrined in the countries' constitutions and operationalised through the enactment of specific policies and laws. Uganda's constitution demands equal treatment of men and women but also makes provision for affirmative action to empower women as the more disadvantaged category. The 1998 Land Act (amended 2004) provides for protection of women's land rights; prohibits the sale, transfer, exchange, pledge, mortgage or lease of family land without prior consent of the spouse and provides for female inheritance rights over land (Rugadya, 2010). Kenya's National Policy on Gender and Development and its plan of action as well as the Sessional Paper No.2 of 2006 on Gender Equality and Development (Mwatha, n.d), provide a framework for mainstreaming gender in social development. In Rwanda, the Law on Matrimonial Regimes, Donations, Succession and Liberalities (Government of Rwanda [GoR], 1999) makes provisions for gender equality

² In 2010, these agencies combined with two other UN agencies, namely the Division for the Advancement of Women; and the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women to form what is now the UN Women.

³ For details see: <http://www.unfpa.org/public/icpd>.

⁴ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf>.

⁵ <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>.

⁶ <http://www.un.org/summit2005/documents.html>.

in property ownership in marriage and inheritance. Other instruments include the 2004 Gender Policy and the 2008 Law for the Prevention, Protection and Punishment of Gender-based Violence (Abbott and Rucogoza, 2011). Tanzania's 1977 constitution (as amended in 2003) and Article 22 of the Constitution of Burundi (2005) prohibit gender-based discrimination and promote equality for all (Huckerby, 2013).

From the preceding section, it can be asserted that a conducive legal and policy framework exists for the integration of gender issues in social development. And yet despite this legal environment gender equality in social development is far from being realised partly due to inadequate implementation, monitoring and evaluation of gender-specific programming in line with the constitutional provisions and other legal commitments.

Nonetheless, within the above policy and legal framework, some steps have been taken to promote gender equality. These include among others; instituting of legal quotas for women's participation in governance, establishment of institutions responsible for gender issues, and gender mainstreaming in key social development programmes.

Legal quotas to promote women's participation in governance

Most countries have adopted affirmative action where legal quotas were set for women's representation at different levels of governance; with most countries reserving a minimum of 30% of the seats in the national parliaments and the local government councils to women (see, for example, Article 78 of Uganda's Constitution and the 1997 Local Governments Act Cap 243; Articles 54, 76 and 82 of Rwanda's Constitution, and Article 66 of Tanzania's Constitution). Constitutional and legal reforms enhance women's empowerment and increase their political participation (UNDP, 2010) as is evident in the cited East African countries, with the proportion of women in national parliaments standing at 35% in Uganda, 36% in Tanzania and 56.3% in Rwanda (UNDP, 2013). Although gendered representation in governance and decision-making organs is not a panacea for poverty reduction and the achievement of social development, it is a good step in the right direction since it can contribute to gender-sensitive legislation. For this to be fully realised, enforcement of policies must be cascaded to the grassroots – beginning from the village councils through the lower local governments. Otherwise, there is a risk of adopting an elitist approach that does not change the position and condition of the majority rural poor.

Establishment of institutions to promote gender equality

All countries in East Africa have established ministries mandated to promote gender equality and provide leadership for the integration of gender issues in development. Other institutions have also been established to address imbalances and promote equality. For example, the Equal Opportunities Commission in Uganda was established by an Act of Parliament (Republic of Uganda, 2007) to address imbalances in development based on gender and other aspects that traditionally disadvantage some groups, while in Kenya, the National Commission on Gender and Development was established in 2003 to coordinate, implement and facilitate gender mainstreaming in national development. However, most of these institutions hardly realise their objectives partly due to inadequate funding. In Uganda, for example, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development is among

the least funded sectors and hence it cannot fulfil its mandate of effectively promoting gender equality and social development.

Integration of gender in key social development programmes

Promotion of gender equality is explicitly stated in the different countries' development plans including Uganda's National Development Plan (NDP 2010/2011-2014/2015) (GoU, 2010); Rwanda's Vision 2020 *Umurenge*⁷ (GoR, 2007), Kenya's Vision 2030 (GoK, 2007) and Tanzania's *MKUKUTA*⁸ II 2011-2015 (United Republic of Tanzania, 2010). A key social development programme where deliberate efforts have been made to address gender issues is the education sector. Gender equity in education is crucial for social development and poverty reduction because of its positive impact on drivers of poverty such as early marriages, high fertility rates, limited access to crucial information, poor decision-making skills and low participation in gainful employment. The adoption of universal education at primary levels and institution of other forms of affirmative action in different countries of East Africa had, as one of its key objectives, the achievement of gender equity in education. Uganda adopted the policy of universal primary education in 1997 and in 2007, it became the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to introduce free secondary education, with gender mainstreamed in both policies. Uganda has also adopted affirmative action in favour of females entering tertiary institutions since 1991 with all female applicants to public universities awarded an extra 1.5 points as a step to increase female enrolment in higher education institutions. Rwanda's Organic Law on Education and the 2008 Girls' Education Policy (GoR, 2003; 2008) provide for affirmative action including retention of pregnant girls and married women in school, while in Tanzania, gender is explicitly mainstreamed in the Education Sector Development Programme (United Republic of Tanzania, 2008). In some cases, however, the application of these strategies has just addressed the issue of quantity while ignoring quality and outcomes. In Uganda, for example, gender parity in education has been attained and yet there remain severe disparities in the performance of girls and boys and also a higher number of girls still failing to complete a particular cycle of education (Twikirize, 2012). Some of the reasons for this relate to the lack of attention to basic needs of girls in schools such as sanitary pads, separate toilets in schools and other sociocultural factors at the household levels.

Other development programmes and strategies as well have not benefited men and women equally because of lack of attention to the inherent challenges in gender relations, especially at the household level. In Rwanda, the proportion of women participating in key programmes of *HIMO* (Labour Intensive Local Development Programme) and *Ubudehe* (shared labour initiative) programmes varied between 30% and 50% by 2009 (GoR, 2009); while in Uganda, women's groups constituted only 18% of total farmer groups enrolled in the National Agricultural Advisory Services under the '*Bonna bagaggawale*' (Prosperity for All) programme (GoU, 2010), despite the fact that women constitute 70% of the agricultural labour force in the country. As has been correctly observed in a number of cases, policies and programmes focus on women instead of addressing gender relations

⁷ A Kinyarwanda term used to refer to the Integrated Local Development Programme to Accelerate Poverty Reduction, Rural Growth and Social Protection.

⁸ A Kiswahili acronym referring to Tanzania's National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty.

(GoU, 2003), with the risk of improving women's productive capacity without necessarily realising positive changes in their socioeconomic well-being, hence perpetuating gender inequalities.

To demonstrate the status of gender equity in development, Table 5.1 provides selected gender-disaggregated social development indicators across some East African countries.

Table 5.1: Selected social development indicators by gender in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda

		Uganda		Kenya		Tanzania		Rwanda	
Key Area	Indicator	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Population	Proportion of population by sex (%)	51%	49%	50.7%	49.3%	51.0%	49.0%	50.89%	49.11%
	% of female-headed households	30%		28.9%		24.4%		23.8%	
Poverty levels	Poverty head count ratio (below \$1.25)	51.5%		43.4%		67.9%		63.2%	
Education	Adult literacy rate	63%	76%	77.7%	88.4%	76%	79%	67.8%	74.8%
	Population with at least secondary schooling	23.0%	23.9%	25.3%	52.3%	5.6%	18%	15.5%	10.3%
Health	Life expectancy at birth	52	48.8	59	57	60	58	53.9	50
	Total fertility rate	6.7	-	4.6	-	5.5	-	5.3	-
	Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000)	435	-	360	-	460	-	340	-
	HIV prevalence (15-24 years)	4.8%	2.3%	4.1%	1.8%	3.9%	1.7%	1.9%	1.3%
	Contraceptive prevalence	24%	-	46%	-	34%	-	52%	-
Ownership of assets	Proportion of registered land owned by women	20%	-	5%	-	na	na	30%	-
Work/employment	Share of wage employment in non-agriculture sector (includes informal sector)	43.7%	56.3%	32%	68%	31%	69%	33%	67%

		Uganda		Kenya		Tanzania		Rwanda	
Key Area	Indicator	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Governance/ decision- making positions	Representation in parliament	35%	65%	9.8%	91.2%	36%	64%	56.3%	43.7%
Gender inequality index		0.517		0.608		0.556		0.414	

Sources of data: *African Development Bank, 2010; Kasirye, 2011; Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2006; National Bureau of Statistics (Tanzania) and ICF Macro, 2011; National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, 2011; UBOS, 2010; 2011; UBOS and Macro, 2012; UNDP, 2013; UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2012; UNFPA, 2011*

Evidently, women constitute a slightly larger proportion of the population and yet, apart from life expectancy at birth, they score poorly on almost all other key socioeconomic indicators across the region, implying that they live a generally poorer quality of life than men. Women still own less property, participate less in governance and decision-making, are less represented in gainful employment and have lower educational attainment and poorer health outcomes. This is in spite of decades of having gender on the development agenda and the resultant numerous international, regional and national commitments to address gender inequality. Although the gender inequality index shows some progress by countries, particularly Rwanda, there are still gaps and challenges that call for continued efforts to promote gender equity in development.

Challenges in achieving gender equality in social development

From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that efforts to integrate gender in poverty reduction and social development have achieved modest results. This persistent gender inequality makes it impossible to achieve sustainable social development in East Africa and in Africa as a whole. Some of the key challenges in integrating gender in poverty reduction and social development will be discussed next.

One of the biggest challenges has been to effectively implement the policies and programmes on gender into sustainable action, partly attributable to weak institutional capacities. The institutions put in place are, in most cases, not adequately financed and equipped to fulfil their mandates across the different layers of the development arena. Limited funding at national and local government levels hinders implementation of activities to promote the integration of gender in development, particularly at the grassroots level.

Coupled with the weak institutional capacities is the tension between the civil and customary law which appears to be strongly entrenched in society. The globalising nature of international and regional legal instruments notwithstanding, most societies in Africa and East Africa remain highly entrenched in their local cultural values and traditions that are sometimes not supportive of a gender equality perspective. Social, cultural and traditional practices and norms deny women various opportunities to effectively participate in production systems. Dominant cultures in Africa still regard the place of

women as being in the kitchen and raising children (EASSI, 2010). Similarly, traditional practices governing property and livestock ownership, access and control over land and benefits accruing to land produce tend to favour men compared to women. In Rwanda, for example, whilst the Land Registration Policy aims to increase and protect women's land rights, the highly patriarchal nature of the society has been cited as a major setback (Carpano, 2011; see also Bayisenge's chapter in this volume). Hence, efforts need to be intensified to transform society's long held attitude towards women's subordinate position. The process of social development is also not free from political connotations. Often, development programmes targeted at vulnerable groups end up being marred by partisan politics, resulting in conflict between political goals and gender and development interests. Hence, even where it is assumed that increased women representation in policy making organs would address gender imbalances, it is not uncommon for representatives to prioritise their political parties' interests and not so much the gender sensitivity of the policy or programme.

Another challenge relates to the tendency towards elitist dominance in gender equality movements. Whereas gender and development policies are generalist and intended to benefit all categories of men and women, the observable trend has been for most benefits to be realised at the top. For example, in terms of women's participation in decision-making, the indicator commonly used is the proportion of women in national parliaments, and ministerial positions among others; largely neglecting the household level decision-making at the grassroots level. Even in sectors such as education, affirmative action to increase enrolment of girls in higher education institutions has tended to benefit girls from relatively wealthier families who, in the first place, are able to attend better schools, and score better grades than their poorer counterparts (Twikirize, 2012). Gender is not a homogenising concept as there are differences within a specific category such as females or males. These differences are based on social class, education, religion and locality, among others. For gender equality in social development, efforts need to be made to involve the most disadvantaged categories of men and women in the planning, implementation and enjoyment of benefits of this process. Affirmative action needs to transcend the gender divide to address the particular vulnerabilities of women and men in order to achieve true gender equity in social development.

Women's disproportionate burden of reproductive roles also remains a major challenge in achieving gender equity in development. In spite of deliberate programmes and affirmative action to increase women's participation in development and spheres of governance and decision-making, the heavy burden of reproductive roles of child-bearing, nurture and household chores often limit their participation. This burden affects not only the women at the grassroots but also those in the so-called positions of responsibility. Whilst, for example, equal opportunities or even affirmative action might be instituted to enhance women's education, the advancement of women is curtailed by commitments to families and to the nurture of children, thus constraining their personal advancement in education and participation in development in equal measure as their male counterparts. Hence, a gender perspective in social development has to move beyond creating policies

and opportunities for participation to removing obstacles to equal participation and also addressing the historical, cultural and contemporary barriers that particularly disadvantage women.

The role of social work

Social work as a human rights profession and as a practice that cuts across the different levels of society – from the individual at the grassroots to the policy and institutional structures – has and can play a crucial role in ensuring that gender issues are fully integrated in development and that gender equality is achieved. This role is especially possible within the social development model of social work. Anderson *et al.* (1994) underscore the egalitarian principles of social development that include equality of access to information, goods, services, opportunities and decision-making processes. This forms a basis for practitioners to take an active role in promoting gender equality as an integral aspect of development and social justice. Dominelli (2012) observes that social workers have advocated gender equality and participated in struggles for social change as individuals active in the women's movement, development workers tackling structural inequalities, therapists addressing individual women's woes, and participants in the UN, its related agencies and international organisations. Undoubtedly, there is still a need for a heightened proactive engagement to promote equality given that social work is preoccupied with the vulnerable and marginalised populations, and women in all societies make up a majority of such populations.

A key social work role is empowerment (Anderson *et al.*, 1994). With regard to gender issues, empowerment has broader and more sustainable benefits for men, women, households, and future generations. Empowerment is founded on a strong belief that poverty (specifically women's poverty) is a consequence of oppression and exploitation of women rather than a lack of productivity (USAID, 2010). It involves a process or processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such ability (Sevefjorð *et al.*, 2001, cited in Onyejekwe, 2002). According to Anderson *et al.* (1994), empowerment entails a process of learning to move from only being reactive to life events to becoming proactive in shaping one's vision for life. These authors propose five spheres of empowerment, namely: personal, social, educational, economic and political empowerment. These provide the intertwined dimensions that can serve as a focus for social work intervention in this regard. According to Anderson *et al.* (1994), the salient roles of the social worker, necessary for empowerment, are those of a broker, teacher, behavior changer, and advocate. Social workers as educators and change agents can be instrumental in promoting strategies for empowering women and men for overall poverty reduction and social development. Social workers play this role through, for example, community development and supporting of microcredit schemes to finance women's activities (Dominelli, 2012), education and sensitisation particularly with regard to social and economic rights.

Social workers also have a role to challenge oppressive cultural and traditional beliefs and practices that perpetuate gender inequality. This has to be done cautiously through adoption of a culturally relevant practice, which takes into account the unique

characteristics including the needs, norms and values within the given context. Whilst not prescribing solutions, social workers can competently help individuals, groups and communities to begin to question their realities through what Freire (1970, cited in Hare, 2004) termed a process of *conscientisation*. Through this process, exploitative and oppressive power structures may be challenged (Midgley, 2010). Through sensitisation, social workers can help clear misconceptions about gender and gender equality among community members, including women themselves, particularly at the grassroots level. Once the long-held beliefs and practices that disadvantage specific categories of the population have been challenged and overcome through a dialogical approach, it becomes easier for programmes aimed at integrating gender issues in development to succeed.

Another critical role, albeit rarely engaged in by social workers, is that of political activism (Mmatli, 2008). The forces that perpetuate gender inequality transcend individual, group and community levels and are quite often engrained in the structural sociopolitical processes of a country. Hence, it is essential for social workers to engage in and promote activism as a strategy for long-term social change. Anderson *et al.* (1994) argue that social workers and their client systems must focus on the identification of deficiencies in economic, political and social structures and contribute to social development through institutional development and control. Key deficiencies in these structures relate to how gender issues are addressed. Armed with this information, social workers and their 'empowered' clients can agitate for change. Healy (1999, cited in Mmatli, 2008) elaborates the role of the activist as that of working with people positioned as powerless in order to unlock their potential and help them realise their capacity to exercise power. Mmatli (2008) suggests a number of strategies through which political activism can be operationalised, including lobbying, participation in electoral politics, political education and diligent voting. Through these strategies, social workers can directly influence policy or exert the necessary pressure on politicians and those in positions of decision-making to adequately address issues of gender in development.

Conclusion

The foregoing sections reinforce the fact that it is impossible to achieve poverty reduction and sustainable social development without paying attention to gender equality. Addressing gender issues in development requires concerted efforts from all levels and sectors of society and particularly, it calls for the unwavering commitment from governments. The efforts and progress made in different countries of East Africa demonstrate that achieving gender equity in social development is a long-term struggle and although interventions may not overturn the gender imbalances overnight, some consistent achievements are possible.

A lot has already been done to bring and sustain gender issues on the social development agenda; but a lot more still remains to be done to ensure that both women and men meaningfully participate in the process and equally enjoy the benefits of social development. This requires concerted efforts of different actors, including social workers, who have the responsibility to not only profess human rights, social justice and equality but actively engage in processes and actions that promote and protect these core values, including gender equality in social development.

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Indigenisation of Social Work in Africa: Debates, Prospects and Challenges

Janestic M. Twikirize

Introduction

In the last two years preceding the writing of this chapter, the author was involved in supervising different teams of international social work students on internship in Uganda through North-South collaborations. The students come from partner universities in Europe to complete their fieldwork in organisations in Uganda under the supervision of social work faculty at Makerere University. One recurring comment from the students has been that what they do during their internship is “not social work”. Even regarding common practices such as counselling, students commented on how the expectations from their agency supervisors and clients are different from their theoretical orientation. This led the author to reflect on the indigenisation discourse. Could it be that the practice of social work in some parts of Africa has been unconsciously or sub-consciously adapted to the prevailing conditions, needs and expectations of the target groups? If this is true with the practice, is it also true with the social work education that should prepare social workers for such practice? Are these so-called indigenised processes written down as practice models or are they agency-specific guidelines? Are these processes proven effective through research or do they simply remain routine practices? What is exactly different in Africa that requires indigenisation of social work? What is involved in this process and what are the current challenges to meaningful indigenisation?

Whereas this chapter may not provide answers to all the questions raised, it attempts to contribute to the indigenisation debate and to bring out some key issues surrounding the discourse from the social development perspective. The chapter begins by highlighting the roots of social work in Africa and how this has generally influenced the nature of social work and also presents some arguments that have surrounded the construct of indigenisation. The next section discusses the socioeconomic context in Africa that warrants adoption of different approaches by social workers, with particular emphasis on the social development perspective. The subsequent section examines the extent of indigenisation of social work, based on recent empirical data from East Africa; as well as the current challenges. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the need for an ongoing evaluation of social work in Africa to ensure that whether most or a few of its aspects are indigenised, they altogether

effectively contribute to the much desired social change for the well-being of the people in Africa. The need for African social work to inform practice in other parts of the world is also underscored.

Colonisation, social work and indigenisation

Colonisation in Africa is not a new subject either in the social, economic, political literature, or even social work. This is largely explained by the fact that the effects of colonisation became felt, not only in the political realm, but also in all spheres of African life, including the economic, the sociocultural and spiritual aspects. With colonisation came altered ways of living, with many societies moving from small chiefdoms to more complex centralised political entities; from agrarian communities to monetary and market-based economies where goods and services became commodities for trade. In Africa, colonisation further became an issue of attitude change and an associated identity crisis whereby Africans began to doubt the worth of their own identity and actions. Maathai (2009, 39) paints a picture of some of the long-lasting effects of colonisation:

Within a few decades, everything foreign – that which the colonial administrators and missionaries brought forth – became synonymous in the local people’s minds with what was more advanced, closer to God’s wishes, and in all ways preferable to their previous way of life and values. The existence they had led before the arrival of the colonial powers and missionaries became not only unworthy, but sinful.

The altered lifestyles also included the ways of helping and solving problems practised in pre-colonial Africa, which were largely informal, micro-level operations carried through the family, kinship, and local chiefdoms and based on mutual aid and collective action facilitated by traditional customs and culture. Once these systems had been weakened through colonisation and modernisation, there was a gap in service provisioning and problem-solving. It was in this context that formal social work was introduced in the colonies. Walton and Abo El Nasr (1988) reiterate the argument that social work resulted from a failure or breakdown of the traditional systems of support and cohesion in society. There is also the argument that social work was simply introduced as a superior form of helping and problem-solving without giving much attention to the previous ways of solving such problems (Gray, Coates and Yellow Bird, 2008; Kreitzer, 2012; Walton and Abo El Nasr, 1988). In this regard, social work was imported “wholesale” from the colonial powers to the colonies to deal with local social problems. This importation was based on the belief that social work was an international or universal profession and was a new social technology for dealing with social problems in all societies (Walton and Abo El Nasr, 1988). Subsequently, a Western social work curriculum was adopted which, according to Kreitzer (2012), was seen as “the best in the world”.

Gray, Coates and Yellow Bird (2008, 1) accuse mainstream social work of being a modernist, Western invention and a means of silencing marginal voices through technology transfer:

Social work is essentially a modernist Western invention which has a history of silencing marginal voices and importing, into diverse cultural contexts across the world, Western thinking primarily from the UK and the USA. This technology transfer is the consequence

of colonizing, westernizing, globalizing and Americanizing forces. For cultural minorities, non-Western cultures and Indigenous Peoples, all these 'izing's' reflect the 'rizing' of Western models and the sinking of local, diverse cultural wisdoms, knowledges and moralities.

Gray (2010, 463) further argues that modernisation was not compatible with traditional lifestyles and that even in the West, "modernization had brought with it the detraditionalization and secularization of society". This was bound to happen in the receiving countries as well, along with the altered lifestyles brought about by the move towards industrialisation. And yet, it must be observed that the process of industrialisation and modernisation in Africa has remained incomplete, maintaining a society that is remarkably different from the Western context of Europe and North America. With the importation of social work, these countries, whose culture, history and economic development differed markedly from the exporting countries, faced new problems in trying to align the profession to local needs, problems and cultures.

Gray, Coates and Yellow Bird (2008) argue that social work has been slow to accept non-Western and indigenous world views, local knowledge and traditional forms of healing which in turn affects its ability to develop and deliver services in an effective, acceptable and culturally appropriate manner. Midgley (1981) referred to this form of transfer of theories and practice methods to developing countries as professional imperialism. It has been argued that in recent years, this professional imperialism is perpetuated through academic exchanges and links between the global North and South; through hierarchical relationships that lead to asymmetrical benefits and capabilities (Rankopo and Osei-Hwedie, 2011). This, however, does not imply the absence of horizontal, dialogical relationships between the North and the South, underscored by the equality principle and resulting in mutual benefits for the parties involved.

It is only when there is recognition and respect for diversity of contexts and subsequently some sort of change in paradigm that social work can be effective in the diverse contexts. It is further argued that for indigenous contexts, social work's dominant modern foundation with its strong focus on individual rights, individualism, and materialism, cannot adequately deal with the responsibilities that membership in a particular community and place, relationship patterns, and/or longstanding cultural traditions require (Gray and Coates, 2008). Maathai (2009, 169), writing generally on the development challenges for Africa, questions the usefulness of such external heritages "as wonderful and enriching to human experience as foreign heritages are to those that subscribe to and value them; they are nevertheless aspects of other people's experiences and heritage". Maathai further argues that foreign cultures, through their strong power of suggestion, may reinforce a sense of inadequacy and nurture an inferiority complex in those constantly exposed to them and urged to perceive them as "better" (2009, 172). In this regard, social work's claim to universal values, rights and standards has to be examined in light of the discipline's definition, interpretation and appropriation in diverse practice contexts.

Social work has an international definition, agreed upon through its two main bodies, namely, the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). The (currently under review)

definition states in part that “utilizing theories of human behavior and social systems, social work intervenes where people interact with their environment” (Hare, 2004, 409). Referring to this particular aspect of the definition, Rankopo and Osei-Hwedie (2011) contend that this standardised definition is the common element that makes social work universal while at the same time pointing to the necessity for variability in practice. The authors further suggest that social work as an idea of helping can be moulded to suit different cultures and thus the practice of social work should be different under different cultural circumstances. In spite of this, it is argued that much effort has been made towards universalisation, standardisation and internationalisation of social work (Rankopo and Osei-Hwedie, 2011). The draft definition under review explicitly incorporates the aspect of indigenous knowledges:

Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance well-being.¹

Besides the international definition, the global standards for the education and training of the social work profession – the fact that their development took into consideration the unique historical notwithstanding, sociopolitical, economic and cultural contexts (Sewpaul and Jones, 2005) – are viewed as threatening to continue the displacement of local ways of knowing and helping (Gray, Coates and Yellow Bird, 2008). Gray, Coates and Yellow Bird give the example of social work’s emphasis on rationality, dualism, individualisation, individual self-determination and self-reliance and therapy as frequently being out of place in communal and traditional societies in which deference to the family and community is the priority. Whilst it is true that such attachments to family and community are being weakened by the generalised forces of globalisation which permeate the different layers of society, this observation calls for consideration of cultural relevance in social work education and practice. Rankopo and Osei-Hwedie (2011) reiterate the stance of indigenisation, and the search for culturally relevant practice and education, as about freeing social work from the dominance of European and North American dictates and argue that social work education and practice that take account of multiple perspectives and cultural explanations of social reality are more relevant than those that seek to transcend all cultures.

Indigenisation or indigenous social work? Conceptual issues in the debate

Many concepts have evolved in relation to the topic of appropriation of social work, namely: indigenisation, localisation, indigenous social work, authentisation, culturally relevant social work, and radicalisation. In its original usage, indigenisation and localisation referred to the processes through which traditional, indigenous and local helping interventions were integrated into mainstream social work practices, and elements of mainstream approaches were adjusted to fit local contexts (Al-Krenawi and Graham,

¹ <http://www.iassw-aiets.org/consultation-on-new-international-definition-of-social-work> [accessed 6 December 2013].

2004; and Barise 2005 cited in Gray, Coates and Yellow Bird 2008, 5). With its conceptual roots in Latin America where it resulted from the social workers' disillusionment with the use of Western theories and practices (Fergusson, 2005), the need for indigenisation of social work is argued on the basis of the differences in countries with regard to their political, economic and social structures and their definitions of social problems. In the Middle East and Egypt, indigenisation of social work in the 1960s to 1980s was an effort to adjust the American model of social work to the local conditions and requirements of the Islamic culture (Ragab, 1995 cited in Fergusson, 2005). Indigenisation essentially connotes a process of trying to fit imported knowledge and models into the local context, implying maintenance of strong links with the original material. This conceptualisation of indigenisation has generated dissatisfaction among the social work scholarship, with some arguing that it is neither adequate nor desirable to try to make external ideals work in a local context. Gray, Coates and Yellow Bird (2008) argue that indigenisation is misappropriated from indigenous social work and that to the indigenous peoples, the term is regarded as "deeply offensive and outmoded" (*ibid.*, 8). According to these authors, indigenous social work, quite often used in reference to First Nations peoples or the Aborigines, is deliberately ethnocentric as it seeks to highlight the unique culture and consequent plight of particular minority cultures and in so doing, insists upon culturally sensitive and culturally specific knowledges and practices (Gray and Coates, 2010, 616). These views suggest some conceptual tension between indigenisation and indigenous social work. Whilst strongly supporting the development of indigenous social work, however, Gray and Coates (2010) caution that an exclusively ethnocentric form of indigenous social work would be counter-productive to types of practice that incorporate knowledge and interventions from other cultures.

Authentisation, which appears to have been somewhat preferred to indigenisation, is based on a philosophical approach that urges social workers in non-Western contexts to move away from simply adapting and modifying Western social work theory and practice and to instead generate knowledge and practice models from the ground up, drawing on the values, beliefs, customs, and cultural norms of local and indigenous helping practices (Gray, Coates and Yellow Bird, 2008). In relation to indigenisation which is largely regarded as modification, authentisation is equated to a complete overhaul of Western theories and models (Mupedziswa, 2001). A related concept is reconceptualisation, which denotes a radical shift in social work's overall focus and aims to modify the individually based goals of Western social work to address social problems that are considered to be more structural in origin (Ferguson, 2005).

According to Anderson *et al.* (1994), reconceptualisation focuses on the reformulation of concepts so that they are in line with efforts to empower marginalised groups in society; with new constructs derived from practice that is based on local experiences. The term is closely interwoven with culturally appropriate social work and in this regard, local culture is used as a primary source for knowledge and practice development (Gray, Coates and Yellow Bird, 2008). Rankopo and Osei-Hwedie (2011) reiterate the differences between the North American and European culture, on the one hand, and the other cultures, on

the other, and argue that these have two fundamentally parallel premises, with the former predominantly emphasising individualism and competition as opposed to societies founded on collectivism, communalism and cooperation.

Maathai (2009) describes culture as the means by which people express themselves through language, traditional wisdom, politics, religion, architecture, music, tools, greetings, symbols, festivals, ethics, values, and collective identity. Kreitzer (2012) expounds on culture as a people's way of life, a collective way of thinking, feeling, and believing; which binds people together through shared beliefs, customs, and values. Although there might be some intersections in the cultures, it is argued that any commonalities become secondary as they are not the major defining factors (Rankopo and Osei-Hwedie, 2011). The differences in culture underlie calls for culturally relevant or appropriate social work education and practice.

From the foregoing arguments, it is apparent that although social work is a universal profession, there have emerged strong arguments to appropriate social work to different contexts in such a way that it effectively addresses the prevailing social conditions. Different interrelated concepts have been used to describe this process but the central thesis is that social work education and practice must be aligned to the cultural context and developmental needs of specific societies.

What is different in Africa that requires indigenisation of social work?

In terms of purpose and goal, social work aims to alleviate human suffering by addressing issues of vulnerability as well as marginalisation and promoting social change. This is a universal goal of social work. However, how this goal is achieved differs from context to context depending on the prevailing priority problems and their nature. In the USA and Britain where social work was conceived, it was of a remedial nature with a major focus on particular fields of practice such as the elderly, handicapped, drug users and alcoholics, and child abuse (Walton and Abo El Nasr, 1988). Whereas these problems existed and continue to exist in Africa, they demand a different approach especially due to their magnitude and the socioeconomic context of widespread poverty and deprivation. In Africa, most of the problems encountered by social workers are structural and systemic in nature, perpetuated by factors such as poor and inequitable service delivery, weak governance and corruption, persistent wars and conflict. Individual casework has proven ineffective in addressing these underlying political and structural causes of individual distress (Mmatli, 2008). Whereas the core mandate of social work has historically been to empower individuals to cope with their environments, in the case of problems of a structural nature, there has to be a deliberate reorientation from the individual to the structures, institutions and systems that greatly affect the individual's well-being.

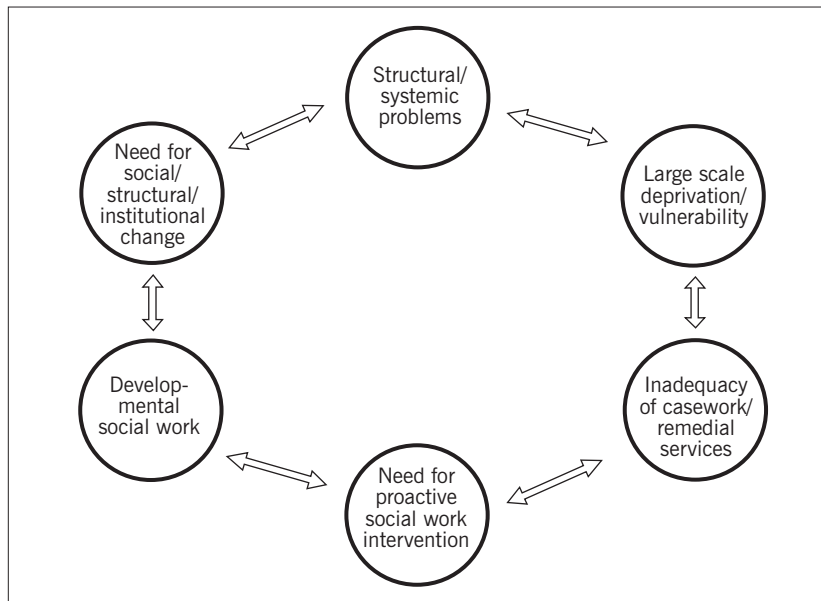
To illustrate the above argument, an example can be taken from the child protection sector. In Uganda, for example, 96% of all the children are classified as vulnerable, with 51% lying in the category of critically to moderately vulnerable (Kalibala and Elson, 2009). The major factors accounting for this vulnerability include widespread poverty, high population growth rates amidst inadequate delivery of basic services, HIV/AIDS

and other diseases, civil conflict and poor implementation of existing laws (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2010). Besides the individual family situations of the children, most of the above factors exist within the complex socioeconomic and political structures and environment in the country. In such a context, individualised services of a residual/reactive nature would hardly address child vulnerability. This picture exemplifies the situation in almost all other sectors of society in most countries in Africa.

Another general example refers to the magnitude of poverty and other social problems in Africa. Close to 50% of Africa's population lives on less than US\$ 1 per day; while 21% of all children below five years of age are malnourished (World Bank, 2013). At 5%, sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rate of HIV/AIDS prevalence in the world, with some countries such as Swaziland posting rates as high as 26% (UNAIDS, 2012). Over 43 million children below the age of 18 have lost one or both parents to AIDS, conflict or other causes (Stover *et al.*, 2007). Illiteracy and ignorance are also persistent, with 38% of the people aged 15 years and above not able to read or write (UNDP, 2013). These and other human development indicators demonstrate the magnitude of poverty, vulnerability and human suffering in Africa and call for long-term responses targeted, not at the individual *per se*, but at the systems, institutions and structures that perpetuate such problems or which are primarily responsible for the required interventions for positive change. This requires a move away from remedial to a largely developmental approach to social work.

The widespread vulnerability and other contextual realities that call for a developmental approach to social work in Africa are diagrammatically presented according to the author's interpretation, in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1: Contextual realities, vulnerability and a developmental approach to social work interventions



The structural roots of social problems, coupled with the sheer magnitude of these problems and the inability of states to finance public welfare, result into large-scale deprivation and vulnerability that cannot be adequately addressed through individual casework and remedial social work practice. The cycle of problems becomes mutually reinforcing, with remedial practice treating just the symptoms while not adequately contributing to structural change and hence, maintaining vulnerability. It is in recognition of this that a more proactive, developmental type of social work has been advocated, whose goal is the attainment of sustainable social change (Lombard, 2011). The pursuit of this goal has sustained the drive towards a developmental model of social work in Africa. In this regard, social work needs to target not just where the individual meets with the environment but, more importantly, the environment itself.

In most countries in the West, the vulnerable groups may be considered the minority and, therefore, could be handled at an individual or family level. Conversely, in the developing countries, including most of Africa, vulnerability is widespread, making it impossible for social work to make a difference by adopting remedial, individual-based approaches. In order to claim its relevance and deal effectively with the historical and emerging social problems, a social development approach to social work has been widely advocated (cf. Osei-Hwedie, 1993; 2002; Midgley, 1995; Midgley and Conley, 2010; Mupedziswa, 2001; Lombard, 2011; Rankopo and Osei-Hwedie, 2011). From a social development perspective, social work's emphasis is on providing service users with tangible social investments that enhance their capabilities and facilitate their participation in community life and the productive economy (Midgley and Conley, 2010). Social workers also need to be significantly involved in macro-level practice including involvement in policy formulation and/or influence through ongoing research, advocacy for appropriate allocation of resources for social services that directly benefit the poor and reduce inequalities, and in some cases, political activism (Mmatli, 2008) for desired social changes. This, however, does not imply that social work loses its global character as a profession dedicated to promoting social change and advocating the rights of the marginalised groups. The values and principles that define social work remain somewhat universal but the practice and focus should be interpreted to suit specific local contexts. It is in this regard that a developmental perspective is much more advocated for the African socioeconomic and cultural context.

Extent of indigenisation of social work in Africa

The debate about indigenisation and cultural relevance has gained momentum since the early 1970s and yet there remains little documented evidence on how this is actually happening in Africa. As observed by Kreitzer (2012), many social work educational programmes have not critically reflected on the cultural relevance of their social work curriculum in relation to the social, political, economic, and spiritual aspects. Since education and training influence the nature of practice, little transformation can be expected in social work practice if minimal change is happening at the education and training level. Mupedziswa (2001) provides criteria upon which indigenisation can be evaluated. Although relating mainly to developmental social work education, the

conceptual framework can be useful for evaluating practice since education and training influence practice. A number of curriculum and extra-curriculum aspects are listed. In summary, the curriculum-related aspects include: the need for ongoing curriculum review to ensure that social work education programmes are sensitive to the needs of any given country; practical fieldwork that emphasises rural placements of a developmental nature; awareness of themes, perspectives and concepts associated with developmental social work such as indigenisation, authentisation, empowerment and capacity-building; and student projects that reflect a developmental orientation with emphasis on research in the rural areas. The extra-curricular activities listed as crucial include: generation and use of indigenous teaching materials in order to equip students with knowledge about local problems and needs; relevant local research; development of strong linkages particularly at the regional level in order to, for instance, facilitate the exchange of literature and faculty; graduate employment patterns; localisation of a substantial proportion of the staff complement; and finally, active engagement of social work faculty in national social policy development and monitoring.

To provide a glimpse of the progress of indigenisation, the following discussion focuses on the East African region, basing on a recent empirical study in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda (the conceptual and methodological aspects of this study are discussed in section three of this publication).

For indigenisation to take root, the concepts, theories and models adopted should preferably be drawn from the bottom up. This requires the use of appropriate materials for teaching and training in social work. Contrary to this ideal, empirical evidence shows an obvious over-reliance on reference materials generated outside Africa. Over 70% of students and 67% of educators in the 25 social work higher education institutions enlisted in the study admitted to relying mainly on textbooks and other materials authored in North America and Europe. Country-specific materials accounted for less than 15% of students' and educators' responses. This in essence reflects limited context-specific concepts, theories, methods and examples. By implication, students and subsequently social work practitioners spend a lot of energy and time trying to interpret and adopt concepts and theories to their local contexts. In many cases, some of these concepts lack equivalents in the local languages, making adaptation a complex undertaking. As a matter of illustration, there is currently no translation of "social work" or "social worker" in any local language in Uganda. Social workers struggle to define who they are among the public, which in turn affects the profession's recognition.

In order to enhance a bottom-up process in the generation of appropriate knowledge and gain a better understanding of prevailing social conditions, local research is essential. Alongside local research, there is need for social workers to actively engage in policy planning, which provides an opportunity to influence policy for positive outcomes particularly for the vulnerable groups that social workers commonly engage with. Social work educators in East Africa only moderately engage in research and policy planning processes. Only 18% of the educators interviewed described their engagement in research as high, with 57% stating that they are only moderately involved while 25% are not

engaged in research at all. The limited engagement in research has been attributed to lack of financial resources (Mupedziswa, 2001), work overload and lack of a deliberate strategy and incentives to promote independent research in the institutions of higher learning. The low levels of independent and local research translate into limited availability of local teaching and reference materials. A positive aspect from the above study relates to the orientation of students' research projects. For developmental social work – underscored in the indigenisation debates in Africa – Mupedziswa (2001) suggests that students' projects should have a particular focus on rural and developmental issues. In this regard, several students (42%) across the four countries in East Africa reported that their current research projects focused on community development issues such as poverty, access to basic services like education and health, water and sanitation, HIV/AIDS, and reproductive health issues among others; while just over 10% focused on individual behavioural problems such as alcohol and drug abuse and commercial sex work.

Developmental social work interventions are often characterised by focused engagements in macro-level social planning and community development (Midgley, 2008). From the empirical study, community-based interventions emerged as the most prominent among the social work practitioners in East Africa generally, while only 10.5% of students expressed interest in pursuing careers in clinical or individual casework. This preoccupation with community-based interventions might partly explain the Western-oriented social work students' difficulty in interpreting the practice in Uganda as social work (referred to in the opening paragraph). Social workers in Africa do not underplay other approaches to social work such as casework, social work with families or group work. As a matter of fact, casework is significant in addressing problems of an individual nature especially in this era of terminal illnesses such as cancer and HIV/AIDS, and the increasing levels of mental illnesses that are better addressed at a clinical level. The arguments in favour of a developmental approach do not necessarily negate other models of practice but rather underscore the degree of emphasis in particular contexts. Some authors (cf. Midgley and Conley, 2010) have argued for a need to apply a developmental model as well in most of these individual-based interventions.

In terms of employment patterns, most social work practitioners are based in urban and peri-urban areas though their employment agencies have outreach activities to rural areas (Twikirize *et al.*, 2013). Most final year students, however, (with the exception of Tanzania) expressed willingness to seek employment in either urban or rural contexts, with close to a third of them stating their first choice of employment locality as rural. While this trend may be influenced by the severely declining employment opportunities in large urban centres, it is positive for indigenisation and the promotion of a developmental approach to social work. This is because the majority of the poor and critically vulnerable people in Africa live in remote rural areas.

Finally, local and regional networks of social workers and social work institutions, which would serve to strengthen the indigenisation of social work, are still generally weak in Africa and East Africa, in particular. Enrolment in National Associations of Social Workers in the respective countries is on average not more than 25%, with Kenya's membership estimated at only 3%. A combination of factors including limited publicity,

voice and visibility has led to a vicious circle of low member subscription and a low profile of the associations. Similarly, membership in regional bodies such as the Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa and the International Federation of Social Workers (Africa region) is minimal. In all the four countries that participated in the study, there was an absence of an association that brings together social work educators. Within East Africa, the PROSOWO project seems to be the first joint undertaking between at least four schools of social work from the region. These revelations point to a minimal exchange and flow of information that would essentially strengthen efforts towards generating a body of social work knowledge and the enhancement of culturally and developmentally relevant practice espoused by proponents of indigenisation.

Current challenges to indigenisation of social work in Africa

From the foregoing section, there is evidence of a strong appreciation of the need for and efforts towards indigenisation of social work in Africa. Nevertheless, a number of challenges still stand in the way of this process. These range from issues related to education and training, to research capacity, culture and identity as well as the role and influence of international development agencies on social work practice. These are next elaborated.

Relevant education is the precursor to appropriate social work practice. If social work education is not adequately indigenised or contextualised, then practice will not be different. Kreitzer (2012, 1) highlights the key issues with social work education in Africa as including the “remnants of Western teaching, the wish to be at par with European universities, and the desire to be black on the outside and European on the inside”. This, in essence, relates to an inclination towards Western education either consciously or unconsciously. The limited availability of local teaching materials has exacerbated the problem. With the exception of a few countries such as South Africa and Botswana, where social work scholars have actively participated in research and scientific publications, the majority of African social work scholarship is severely under-represented in scientific publications. Mupedziswa (2001) rightly observes that in Africa, there is generally no lack of enthusiasm among academic staff about the production of indigenous materials but that a major problem has been the lack of financial resources. Besides the limited institutional funding for research, African scholars are also often overburdened with actual teaching responsibilities as well as the search for alternative means of survival alongside their official academic mandates due to poor remuneration in the institutions of higher learning. They quite often have to weigh between publishing and doing an additional activity for a side income to meet their needs and those of their dependants. Such a side activity might at best be commissioned research (Mupedziswa, 2001) whose agenda, objectives and dissemination levels are already set by the commissioning agency. Under such circumstances it becomes easier to refer to already existing literature – mostly foreign – than trying to generate local knowledge through research and publications.

Another challenge relates to intra-national cultural diversities. Admittedly, culture is not about uniformity since, as noted by Kreitzer (2012), within any cultural group there are variations in the details of a particular cultural activity depending on gender, occupation, location and groupings. However, the multiplicity of cultures in a country

or region can pose a challenge especially where the differences in a given society are a bit more pronounced that it is difficult to talk about national identity. In Uganda, for example, there are 56 officially recognised indigenous communities (Republic of Uganda, 1995), most of them with micro-cultures and different languages. With the official language as English, and with no national language, there is little that promotes unified values and a sense of identity besides the fact that all are Ugandan. Professionals who work with grassroots communities to which they do not belong have to work through an interpreter as do the politicians and administrators when they address people in parts of the country from where they do not originate. These groups sometimes have conflicting cultures, with what is acceptable in one not necessarily being acceptable in the other. Achieving a satisfactory level of indigenisation of social work in such a setting can be an uphill task. Whereas social workers are expected to acquire and develop competence to work in diverse cultural settings, sometimes it becomes difficult for practitioners to quickly adapt their practice to the specific needs and sub-cultures of the communities within which they work.

Furthermore, while cultural relevance has been attractively presented in the indigenisation discourse, it can also pose some difficulties in the sense that culture is neither static nor is it always positive. In addition, forces of globalisation have a direct or indirect influence on the local context including the so-called traditional values and practices, local policy, and the economic context. To address this ongoing conflict, individuals and groups of people in a given context need to be resolute on what they interpret as their culture and identity in a globalising world. Quoting Pope John Paul II, Maathai (2009) concurs that Africans themselves “had to decide what they wished to take from other cultures, to claim what is good and retain it, and decide what was worthless at this time in their development and needed to be abandoned” (*ibid.*, 179). At the same time, there are aspects of the so-called traditional cultural values and practices that may in fact not be desirable for effective social work practice and social change that benefits everybody. For example, the subordinate position of women so pronounced and almost accepted by cultures in Africa provides ground for domestic and gender-based violence as well as the perpetuation of poverty and vulnerability. In this case, adoption of a rights-based approach, and the promotion of gender equality should be considered as a more positive approach than the indigenous practices that perpetuate inequality. Osei-Hwedie (2002) and Rankopo and Osei-Hwedie (2011) respond to this dilemma by arguing that indigenisation does not mean social work in African societies must be grounded in the so-called traditional or “primitive” values but on whatever the masses regard to be an authentic expression of themselves. Conversely, Kreitzer (2012) contends that the task of Africans is in changing the perception of their cultures as negative and Western-dependent, to a positive contributor to the world. Once this positive perception has been achieved, then social work can easily be developed from within and the developed knowledge freely shared with the rest of the world, as positive knowledge worth sharing and being adopted by the rest of the world.

Coupled with the challenge of micro-cultures as well as the negative aspects of what is traditional, is the issue of African identities that appear in some cases to be indefinite. Kreitzer (2012; 47) defines identity as:

the means by which a person, group, nation, or continent defines themselves in terms of their individuality and difference to others. It is the way that a person, group, nation, and continent sees themselves in relation to those around them and what makes them unique from others.

Kreitzer correctly observes that culture and identity are interlinked, implying that the destruction of culture negatively impacts on identity. As already highlighted, the decades of colonialism and post-colonialism have left African culture weakened and with this a compromised identity where a significant proportion of the populations, including the elite, still struggle with their own identities and lust after foreign culture and a Western identity. Maathai (2009, 168) attributes this identity crisis to the split life lived by the colonised people for centuries:

In the colonial era and the decades following African independence, the cultures of the African peoples were trivialized and demonized by colonial administrators, missionaries, and local devotees. Then the pre- and post- independence leaders and the international community urged the peoples of Africa to modernize, move beyond their “tribal” inheritance, and embrace the newer cultures, readily available today in film and on television and the Internet.

Accordingly, it is this historical demonisation of traditional culture and the resultant identity crisis, that leaves the contemporary scholar, practitioner and even the client in an internal dilemma of what is culturally appropriate. If the Western way of thinking and doing was promoted as superior, if the educator and practitioner are still similarly subjected consciously or unconsciously to this Western thinking, and if almost all the other facets of life including the modes of dressing, eating, and information sharing have been “modernised” (read “westernised”), is it not counter-productive to try and stick to tradition and culture? The loss of traditional culture, and along with it the accepted values and taboos, has been cited as one of the major causes of vulnerability and social problems such as the misuse of alcohol and drugs, irresponsible behavior toward women and girl children, high school dropout rates, prostitution, theft, and breakup of family relationships, the phenomenon of children living on the street, and the spread of HIV/AIDS (Maathai, 2009). All these combine to slow down efforts towards indigenisation of social work.

At the practice level, there is a challenge related to the role of international agencies, particularly, the international non-governmental organisations working in the social development sector. These organisations, which in some countries such as Uganda and Kenya employ the highest proportion of social workers, tend to have somewhat standard models of practice adopted across different countries where they operate. Efforts to contextualise their operations notwithstanding, in most cases, the social workers have to adapt to the agencies’ philosophy, procedures and models with little room for innovation. This adherence to organisational rules, values and guidelines can compromise the extent to which interventions are contextualised or indigenised. Manji and O’Coill (2002) highlight

the paternalistic role of NGOs in development which no doubt becomes played out in their underlying ideology and methods of practice. Issa and Shivji (2007) substantiate this stance by arguing that the sudden rise of NGOs and their prominent role in Africa are part of the neoliberal, organisational and ideological offensive. In a rather radical but somewhat rational assessment of NGOs, Issa and Shivji sum up the limitations of local innovation in the context of donor dependent NGOs as follows: "Our erstwhile benefactors now tell us: 'just act, don't think, and we shall fund both'" (ibid., 49). The above views bring to the fore the limitations that social work practitioners, who in most cases are under-represented at the level of agency policy (cf. Twikirize *et al.*, 2013), face in the struggle for indigenisation and culturally relevant social work practice.

Conclusion

The indigenisation discourse challenges the indiscriminate importation of Western social work to other different contexts and calls for appropriation of education and practice. There is consensus in Africa that indigenisation has much to do with adopting a developmental approach to social work as well as generation and respect for indigenous helping processes through culturally relevant practice. Fergusson (2005) proposes a cyclical, multi-directional model of indigenisation and authentisation where ideas can be received and implemented; received, modified and implemented; or newly generated within a country or culture as a product of the local political, social and economic contexts. Any country can develop and disseminate innovative technology and ideas and/or receive such technology and ideas from other countries. Ferguson (2005) argues that the transmission and retransmission of technology and ideas among all countries eliminates the hegemony inherent in the existing models in which developed countries are continuously the creators and donors of technology and ideas, while the developing countries are consistently the recipients and modifiers of imported knowledge and practices. The inherent difficulty in this model is the limited opportunity for the developing country or community to disseminate their innovative technology and ideas.

In the pursuit of indigenisation, social work scholars, practitioners and policy makers in Africa do not necessarily have to get rid of everything foreign, nor do they have to keep lamenting about the inappropriateness of social work theory as handed down from the West, but they together with those they work with, need to identify what is positive from either side and come up with a locally appropriate practice. This appropriateness is in itself dynamic and must be checked against the changing cultural values, norms and practices in order for social work to remain relevant in addressing current and emerging challenges in Africa. That should be the essence of indigenisation of social work and social development.

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The State of Social Work Education and Practice in Kenya

Gidraph G. Wairire

Introduction

This chapter presents a broad exposition of the current state of professional social work education and practice in Kenya. It begins with some brief reflections about the sociocultural and economic scenarios which directly or indirectly create problems and issues that demand social work interventions. It then presents a critical analysis of social work education and practice from the pre-colonial era through the current post-colonial era. The subsequent changes as well as developments therein are examined and discussed as a basis for social work education and practice in the country.

The scope for social work in Kenya and the type of social work methods commonly practised by social workers, including developmental social work, are analysed. Functions served by social workers together with the challenges that confront the profession in Kenya are critically discussed. Some of the said challenges revolve around the work environment in which social workers operate, the existing training scenarios in the country, and other factors directly linked with the social workers themselves. Finally, some tangible measures to deal with these challenges are highlighted.

Kenya's sociocultural and economic situation

Kenya's sociocultural and economic situation comprises of different variables including but not limited to language, culture, traditions, beliefs, orientations to different aspects of life, and means of livelihood. They emanate from the rich diversity of the population drawn from the more than 42 ethnicities in Kenya. Each has its own culture and traditions, some of which are influenced by diverse factors such as climatic conditions, which in turn dictate the use of natural resources. Some communities are predominantly farmers, while others are pastoralists, fishermen or traders. A report by the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA, 2005) observes that cultural and climatic characteristics of these ethnic groups have developed over many years and incorporated coping mechanisms for climatic variations. These characteristics also influence their economic livelihoods even though social change has its own effects that impact on their lifestyles in different ways.

Kenya became independent on 12 December 1963 as a multi-party state. It converted to a one-party state in 1982, but reverted to a multi-party system in 1992. The adoption of a new constitution in 2010 (GoK, 2010) brought in changes that cut across the political, social and cultural lives of the Kenyan people. Some of these changes include devolution and access to services, sovereignty of the people, entitlements of citizens, bill of rights within which crucial issues of social work relevance such as human dignity, equality and freedoms from discrimination, rights of children, youth, persons with disabilities, older members of society, minorities and marginalised groups amongst others are encompassed (GoK, 2010). With this, more scope for social work is gradually becoming vivid, particularly on governance at the county level and on issues of human rights and participatory ideals to enhance the well-being of citizens. In the same constitution, social work has a major stake in facilitating the voice of the people in determining the type of society they want and other matters that affect them.

According to the 2009 census report, Kenya had a population of 38.6 million people in 2009 with a high population growth rate of 2.9% (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2010) of which 67.7 % lived in rural areas while 32.3% lived in urban areas. The population is currently estimated at 43 million (World Bank, 2014). Regional population densities range from an average of 230 persons per km² in high potential areas to an average low of 3 persons per km² in arid areas (NEMA, 2005). Kenya's population is also characterised by rapid rural-urban migration. Over 50% of the population is below 15 years. A rapidly increasing population limits the government's ability to satisfactorily provide social services and invest in productive sectors, create employment and deal effectively with serious environmental concerns (NEMA, 2005).

The economy is characterised by increasing poverty due to a combination of factors, including a poor state of infrastructure; depressed investments; declining tourism activities; a slump in industrial production; deteriorating terms of trade; and increasing climatic variations. This has been compounded by a decline in development assistance since the early 1990s. In addition, foreign debt, which is an enormous economic burden, continues to grow. Moreover, Kenya depends on agricultural and mineral exports in their raw form and also on tourism, on which it has little influence. Agriculture is the mainstay of the Kenyan economy. It is the basis for food security, for economic growth, employment creation and foreign exchange generation (GoK and UNDP, 2010).

Traditional version of social work in Kenya

In pre-colonial times, social support mechanisms in Kenya were embedded in the sociocultural practices of different communities. Social responsibilities were clearly defined for different community members through traditional socialisation. Individuals with different needs requiring social interventions were, therefore, helped at the community and individual levels. Wa Mungai, Wairire and Rush (2014) assert that household heads and village elders served many of the roles which modern social workers play today, particularly with regard to the enhancement of the social functioning of individuals in the society. Heads and mentors of age groups locally known as *rika* equally played significant roles that helped an individual or group to manage problems of living.

From another perspective, Midgley (1995) points out that originally, social services were not provided by the colonial governments but by missionary organisations or charities created by settlers or educated local people. These activities coexisted with ancient traditional welfare institutions. These include the ones highlighted above in the traditional society in Kenya. This situation notwithstanding, social problems such as juvenile delinquency, destitution and similar social problems preoccupied the colonial government which gradually recognised the need for specialised public agencies which could deal with them. In essence, therefore, the seeds for a formal welfare system within which modern social work evolved were sown during the colonial regime in Kenya.

Social work education in Kenya

Social work education in Kenya started with the establishment of the first training institution for social work in 1962 (Kenya-Israel School of Social Work) through which aspiring social workers were equipped with different professional skills for interventions in different situations (WaMungai, Wairire, and Rush, 2014). The training was offered at diploma level. The institution was established through grants from the Israeli government, facilitated through the then Department of Social Development. The school was later on integrated with the Kenya Institute of Administration where social work training continued at the diploma level (WaMungai, Wairire and Rush, 2014).

Prior to 1962, there was no known formal social work training in Kenya. Chitere (1994) reckons that the Jeanes School in Kabete whose establishment dates as far back as 1925 was training village guides. From 1946, the school played a key role in training social welfare workers (SWWs) who later on became known as community development assistants – CDAs (Chitere, 1994). Apart from training farmers, local leaders, craftsmen, women leaders in domestic science and handicrafts, the Jeanes School indirectly sowed the seeds for social work training. Chitere (1994) further notes that the staff and students of this institution spent part of their time in rural communities assisting with social development-related activities.

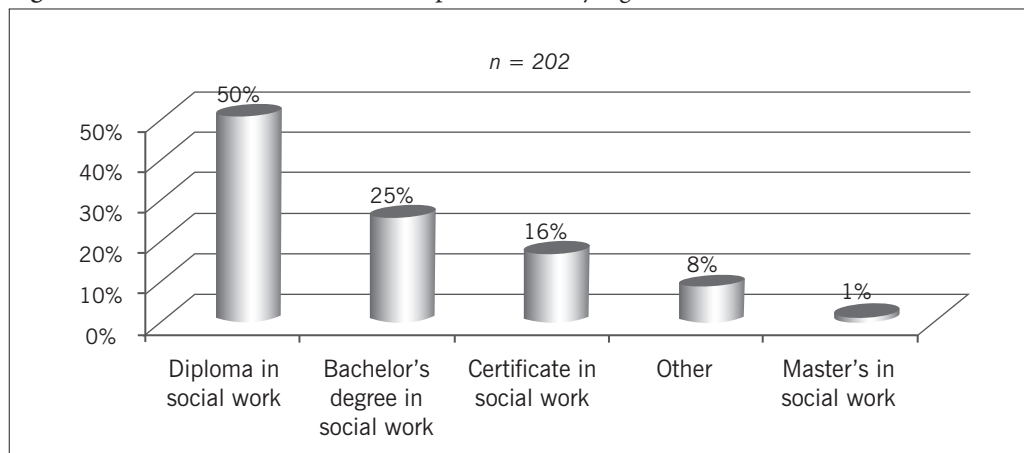
It is worth noting that professional training for social work in Kenya changed significantly in 1976 when training at degree level was started at the University of Nairobi's Department of Sociology (now Department of Sociology and Social Work). However, post-graduate training at a master's degree level has not yet been realised. A diploma in social work and social development was introduced in the late 1990s to cater for para-professionals in need of professional training in social work, amongst other specific needs of trainees. Some para-professionals were required to provide evidence of training by their employing agencies for upward mobility as employees. The Department of Psychiatry at the University of Nairobi also has a post-graduate diploma in psychiatric social work specifically designed for those in mental health and related service institutions.

Other public universities offering social work training at diploma and degree levels have since come up with varying course contents. These include Moi University, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, South Eastern Kenya University, Maasai Mara University and Kibabii University College. Private universities with social work training programmes include Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Daystar University

and St. Pauls University (www.cue.or.ke). The Government Training Institute in Embu and the Kobujoi Development Training Institute that is run by the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret have also been training social workers at diploma level. Several commercial colleges have also come up in the last 20 years, offering social work courses at certificate and diploma levels. Most of them are concentrated in Nairobi and other major towns in the country. The social work training offered in all these institutions is generic. Specialised social work concentration areas of training are yet to start in Kenya.

A close observation of the status of social work education in Kenya reveals very slow growth. At the time of writing this article, only one university in Kenya – the Catholic University of Eastern Africa – had a master's degree programme for social work (Commission for University Education, 2014). Whereas the need for post-graduate social work qualifications still exists, many universities have not prioritised post-graduate training in social work which indirectly limits a strong human resource to teach social work at the post-graduate level. Few social work academics in Kenya have Master's in Social Work degrees or PhDs in social work. The same applies to social work practitioners as well. The PROSOWO¹ study (Wairire *et al.*, 2014), conducted in Kenya in 2011, confirmed that very few social workers from a total sample of 202 had higher qualifications in social work (see Figure 7.1). Of these 8%, had other qualifications that are not necessarily social work such as sociology, population studies, urban planning and development studies.

Figure 7.1: Distribution of social work practitioners by highest level of social work education



Source: Wairire *et al.* (2014)

In addition to the above, the few social work academics who train outside Kenya rarely come back, citing poor remuneration, among other reasons. This may further explain why social work literature by Kenyan social work scholars is limited. Additionally, there is very little social work research in Kenya since the social work graduates with a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) or Bachelor of Arts in Social Work degrees end up undertaking post-graduate degree programmes in other disciplines.

¹ PROSOWO = Promotion of Professional Social Work in East Africa.

Besides this, the few universities that have undergraduate training programmes in social work do not have fully fledged social work departments which, ideally speaking, may be better placed to articulate the training needs for social work, not only in the institutions where they are established, but also in the country at large. Many operate under the shadow of other social science departments like sociology, criminology and psychology. Fully fledged social work departments are better able to generate, manage and regularly review training curricula that match the prevailing social work needs of the country and ensure the recruitment, staff development and sustenance of qualified social work personnel with a passion for the profession. This is in addition to strongly advocating the needs and interests of social work education and practice within and outside the university as well as projecting a strong public image for the social work profession.

Scope of social work practice in Kenya

The scope for professional social work practice in Kenya has been changing as the country undergoes different phases of development and reels under the impact of globalisation (Wairire, 2008). Many have now developed fully fledged social work careers in different sectors including child welfare services, probation services, hospital settings, school social work, industrial social work, community development and microfinance institutions. The services provided by these social workers cover both urban and rural areas. The mode of service delivery may differ depending on the agency, its focus and mandate, and the responsiveness of target beneficiaries to the services provided (Wairire, 2008).

It should also be noted that professional social work practice in the Kenyan context is largely generic. Specialised social work practice has not fully taken shape in Kenya probably because the profession is still growing and the needs for intervention are quite overwhelming. In addition, some social work-related jobs are often undertaken by people who are not necessarily trained as social workers owing to the fact that the visibility of the profession is not very strong in the country. Nonetheless, the core social work functions served in Kenya are remedial, maintenance, preventive and social change which Midgley (2010) also views as the developmental function.

Much of social work practice in Kenya is realised through casework, group work and community organisation which are the commonly practised social work methods. Although there is no tangible evidence in training and implementation for social welfare administration, research and policy practice as specific social work methods in the Kenyan situation, many social workers render services to different client groups as social welfare administrators, researchers and policy makers in different organisations. Social workers are employed in the civil service, namely: government departments at the county and national levels; in international organisations such as United Nations and Compassion International; in local NGOs, faith-based organisations and community-based organisations. Some work as salaried employees in these organisations while a few work as volunteers or freelance practitioners and/or consultants. Specifically, the scope for social work includes, but is not limited to, the following areas:

Community development

This is a very broad area where social workers engage their client groups both in urban and rural settings largely through community organisation. The Social Work Dictionary (Barker, 2003) defines community organisation as an intervention process used by social workers and other professionals to help individuals, groups and collectives of people with common interests or from the same geographic areas to deal with social problems and to enhance social well-being through planned collective action. In the Kenyan situation, however, many social workers and other development practitioners use the terms community development and community organisation synonymously.

Key interventions in community work focus on small community groups such as women, youth, children, people with disabilities, the aged and other groups with specific interests. These interventions depend on the needs of the particular groups but are largely done at the community level through different programmes such as adult literacy/awareness programmes on specific themes and/or issues, for example, health, income-generation through microfinance services, environmental protection, sites and service schemes in spontaneous settlements. The overall aim of social work in such contexts is to build people's capacities by providing them with knowledge and skills to bring improvements in their lives.

Child welfare services

This is a critical social work domain that primarily focuses on social protection for children in a society that is rapidly evolving, a process which, if not carefully handled, has the potential to neglect children or to leave them exposed to different factors that are detrimental to their overall well-being. Specifically, social workers play different roles as they engage in different services for children such as probation for child offenders, adoption and foster care including care for abandoned and rescued children, street children, orphaned and other vulnerable children. It is one major area where legislative mechanisms for child protection through the Children's Act, 2001 (GoK, 2002) specifically recognise social workers and their role in enhancing the welfare of children in Kenya.

Correctional social work

Much of correctional social work in Kenya is practised in the criminal justice system which includes: the prison, the judiciary, correctional institutions for child offenders, juvenile courts, probation service and community policing. Major functions served by social work here are largely rehabilitative, restorative and developmental. The overall aim is to facilitate the individual clients to get their rights, even if convicted of breaking the law, to be rehabilitated to fit in the society, following the completion of their term in prison. It is important to note that correctional social work interventions are often backed up by established legislative instruments such as the Children's Act, 2001 and Community Service Orders Act, 1998.

Medical social work

This often involves services provided by social workers in different health care settings in both public and private institutions. Most of the roles played here are geared towards

enhancing access to the quality of care provided by health care personnel. Some crucial social work roles in medical social work include social investigation to help medical personnel fully understand patient conditions which may impact on the treatment provided, patient/relative counselling, palliative care and health education programmes. A significant feature here is the interdependency of social work with other professions and the fact that social workers cannot operate in isolation of other professionals such as doctors, nurses, psychiatrists and pharmacists.

Developmental social work in Kenya

Although much of social work in Kenya is largely generic, as earlier mentioned, it is important to note that developmental social work has a central place in the country. Scholars such as Patel and Hochfeld (2008) and Lombard (2007) visualise developmental social work as an integrated, holistic approach to social work that recognises and responds to the interconnections between the person and the environment; links micro and macro practice; and utilises strength-based and non-discriminatory models, approaches and interventions and partnerships to promote social and economic inclusion and well-being.

Midgley and Conley (2010) specifically stress that developmental social work not only emphasises clients' strengths and the importance of empowerment but also requires that clients are provided with tangible social investments that enhance their capabilities and facilitate their participation in community life and the productive economy. They further posit that in such contexts, developmental social workers believe that clients' strengths and capabilities need to be augmented with public resources and services if those to be served by the profession are to live productive and fulfilling lives. Gray (2006) opines that developmental social work is generally practised within a developmental social welfare system. The PROSOWO study (Wairire *et al.*, 2014) confirmed that the majority (52%) of social workers in Kenya were engaged in developmental social work within the context of NGOs as indicated in Table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1: Distribution of social workers by nature of social work and type of employing agency

Nature of social work	Employing agency					
	Government department (n=67)	NGO (n=110)	CBO* (n=23)	Private (commercial) (n=2)	Total %	Total count (n=202)
Remedial/correctional/Therapeutic	13.9%	13.4%	2.5%	-	29.7%	60
Developmental social work	12.4%	32.2%	6.4%	1%	52%	105
Generalist practice	6.4%	8.9%	2.5%	-	17.8%	36
No response	0.5%	-	-	-	0.5%	1

* CBO = Community-based organisation

Source: Wairire *et al.* (2014)

Developmental social work, however, requires an enabling environment mandated by a policy and legislative framework (Lombard and Wairire, 2010) within the country under which it is practised. The most notable framework that gave rise for developmental social work in the Kenyan situation is the Economic Recovery Strategy (ERS) for Wealth and Employment Creation. It contributed to the growth of Kenya's economy, particularly after the National Rainbow Coalition Government headed by President Mwai Kibaki came to power in 2002. The growth was positive in the basic facets of the Kenyan populace such as education, health, gender and environment. Besides, it provided more resources for meeting the Millennium Developmental Goals across Kenya's economy (GoK, 2008).

ERS contributed to important schemes that boost people's livelihoods at the grassroots level. These schemes include the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), the Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF), the Constituency Bursary Fund, the Secondary School Education Bursary Fund (SEBF) and the Constituency AIDS Fund. In accordance with the principle of decentralisation in development, decision-making responsibilities for local development initiatives are redistributed down from government ministries and departments to constituencies. Through the CDF, for example, different communities across the country have managed to create tangible infrastructure, such as classrooms, health centres, village roads, improved market stalls, community water kiosks, school dining halls and village polytechnics. CDF-supported projects are typically highly participatory through which many communities have been empowered. Besides, if well implemented, CDF has the potential to reduce inequalities in terms of opportunities and resources and, by extension, facilitate maximum realisation of individual potential, particularly amongst Kenya's poor and vulnerable groups (Lombard and Wairire 2010).

ERS came to an end in 2007, but gave way to the Kenya Vision 2030 which currently serves as the new long-term development blueprint for Kenya. Its aim is to transform Kenya into a middle-income country by providing a good quality of life for all its citizens in a clean and secure environment (GoK, 2007). Most of the specified schemes to boost people's livelihoods that had come up with ERS are still in place while some like the Local Authority Transfer Fund were replaced by other devolved funds at the county level, following the onset of county governments in 2013 that followed the implementation of the new constitution promulgated in 2010.

Other government funds such as the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (<http://www.youthfund.go.ke>) and the Women's Enterprise Development Fund (www.wef.co.ke) have also yielded a platform for developmental social work by serving as forums for social investment through which the capabilities and strengths of women and the youth in diverse facets can be boosted. They are good examples of essential public resources and services that Midgley and Conley (2010) advocate for if those to be served by the social work profession are to live productive and fulfilling lives. Some primary roles of social workers in the process include mobilisation of women and the youth, and training them on how to access the funds and use them amicably in line with the set regulations that govern access to those funds.

Partial requirement for such funds is the formation of small self-help groups locally known as *vyamas* wherein members with common needs join hands and find ways and means to collectively deal with their needs. In as much as *vyamas* can be formed by men and women alike, the majority of *vyamas* in the country have been formed by women. Not all *vyamas* address their needs and issues through existing government funds. Many make maximum use of the inherent resources within them and/or seek for external resources beyond the government provisions. Kinyanjui (2012) reckons that *vyamas* are based on local social relations, networks and faith in each individual member. They activate cultural norms, values and ethics that help in self-regulation which in turn contributes to their inner strength and sustenance.

Significantly, *vyamas* reflect an afro-centric perspective of strengths-based practice in social work with specific reference to community work in Kenya. Midgley (2010) postulates that social workers adopting strengths-based approaches help clients to recognise and utilise their inner resources, skills and capacity for growth. Such clients are innately resilient and their ability to identify and negotiate solutions should be supported. *Vyamas* are indigenous, self-driven, and greatly manifest the inner strength, resolve and resilience of different client groups and communities in dealing with issues which otherwise make their lives unbearable. Their impact and relevance as an alternative local mechanism to address diverse needs of different groups and communities in Kenya is noticeable in both urban and rural communities.

The foregoing discussion, therefore, is a reflection of the fact that social work in Kenya is overtly developmental; a fact that probably explains why many social workers operate in community settings or work for agencies whose focus is clientele in group and community settings. They play different roles such as advocating for the rights of marginalised communities, lobbying for resources for the under-privileged, linking client groups with resource providers, implementing and monitoring different programmes to uplift the livelihoods of individuals, groups, families and communities.

From a critical perspective, however, developmental social work in Kenya encompass many social work roles which are sometimes undertaken by non-social workers. In the civil service, for example, government officers including probation officers, child welfare officers, labour welfare officers and social development officers in different line ministries both at the county and national level, often execute social work tasks although they are not necessarily social work professionals. The situation is further aggravated by the fact that only a few social workers are fully involved in the Kenya Vision 2030, even though the said development blueprint is largely interdisciplinary.

Challenges confronting professional social work in Kenya

Professional social work practice in Kenya has often found itself facing all sorts of drawbacks and impediments which include social cultural, economic and political challenges (Wairire, 2008). Some of these challenges confront social workers in the course of duty while others are general challenges that revolve around the phases of social work development in the country. Political conflict is one such challenge which sometimes strikes hard leaving many social workers with no other option but to leave the profession, change employers

or relocate to 'safer havens.' It is worth noting that much of the said conflict takes different forms depending on the causal factors, duration of the conflict and its impact on both the social workers and their clients.

A worrying social work challenge experienced in the Kenyan situation is the high influx of refugees from neighbouring countries such as South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia. A major outcome associated with it is the increasing cases of terror attacks in the country which (at the time of writing this paper) have left many people dead and which escalated after the Kenya Defence Forces entered Somalia in 2011 to weed out the Al Shabaab who were threatening the tourism industry that is a central pillar of Kenya's economy. Several terror attacks have been executed by the Al Shabaab in public places including churches, public service vehicles, bus stations, police camps and commercial centres, the most notable one being the 2013 Westgate Mall attack, in which 67 people lost their lives and several others were injured. Sympathisers of this terror group are believed to have entered Kenya in different ways but primarily as refugees. The escalating cases of Al Shabaab terror attacks is, therefore, emerging as another example of challenges for social work in conflict situations since both the assailants and victims must be handled with the same fundamental principles that govern professional social work practice. Displaced persons, particularly those who have not been resettled following the 2007-2008 election violence, also constitute client groups served by social work in political conflicts in Kenya.

While social work may make significant inroads in addressing the immediate outcome of these conflicts such as psychological trauma, disrupted livelihoods, displacement and family separation, addressing the root cause of the problem is a big challenge for social workers. This is because the cause is often too political and needs a political answer which the social workers may not be able to provide. The social workers themselves may be victims of the same problem hence on the run just like anyone else. Moreover, patriotic feelings for a practising Kenyan social worker may supersede objective feelings entailed in social work while dealing with a refugee engaged or suspected to be involved in terror-related activities.

A related challenge for social workers has been experienced in their efforts to champion the rights of the refugees in Kenya. This is with particular reference to special needs such as protection and security, sustainable livelihoods, education, health and access to information. While the rights are noble and just, the general Kenyan public residing in areas dominated by the refugees is very critical of this for they feel that special treatment is sought and granted to refugees, yet many Kenyans have no access to the same rights. This arises out of the perceived notion that many humanitarian agencies appear "to be there" for the refugees, yet the locals similarly struggle for the same services in vain (Wairire, 2008).

Social work in Kenya is still a growing profession. Training institutions are limited in number and are unable to meet the country's demand for social work professionals. Many social work institutions have been unable to commence post-graduate programmes in social work owing to the paucity of government funding or other reasons. This in turn

often frustrates many social workers, who silently quit the profession after undertaking post-graduate training in other non-social work fields.

Some academics who teach social work units in some training institutions do not have requisite social work qualifications, particularly those building their academic career from a non-social work background. This may be due to several reasons such as genuine lack of social work trained personnel to teach those units, seeming unwillingness by department heads to assign social work units to academics trained in social work or the non-appreciation of social work as a profession in the institutions where social work training is offered.

In addition, some of the students who undertake social work studies at certificate and diploma levels do not necessarily pursue social work training at degree level. This indicates a serious gap in terms of producing and equipping adequate social work human resources with requisite skills at higher education levels to address diverse issues of social work concern which keep changing as the society changes.

A major challenge is that social workers in the country have not been able to lobby strongly for legislation that could give social work in Kenya a new face and public recognition. In this context, the social work voice, sentiments and aspirations may not be fully heard, rendering social workers practically powerless to make any significant difference to development (Lombard and Wairire, 2010).

Other general challenges include the limited recognition of social work as a unique profession in the country. This may be due to several reasons including the lack of legislative mechanisms that clearly stipulate the professionalism within social work and guard it against infiltration by people without social work training. In addition, Kenya has no social work professional association that enjoys universal allegiance among social work practitioners and social work academics (WaMungai, Wairire and Rush, 2014) while at the same time, there is no mutually agreed formal code of ethics to guide social workers in their interventions.

Equally important to note is the fact that there is a notable mismatch in the roles that social workers play in Kenya and the professional skills that they possess. This is probably because the labour market in Kenya sometimes is not so much skills-oriented in some sectors. As long as the job at hand can be done by anyone and it is monetarily rewarding, anyone can take it. Therefore, many social workers often find themselves taking up jobs that are not necessarily social work in nature such as drivers, telephone operators, sales representatives, public relations personnel, among others.

Many social workers in Kenya operate in areas where access to professional literature, opportunities for professional comradeship and opportunities for refresher training in order to cope with the demands of a changing society are non-existent. Many also lack opportunities to attend professional symposia and conferences locally or abroad, all of which limit their exposure to the emerging realities of social work practice locally and globally. In the instances where such opportunities arise, many cannot afford, to take advantage of them owing to huge costs of attending such forums, yet the organisations that employ them do not have budgetary allocations for such expenses.

Besides, many social work roles are not necessarily limited to social workers alone. The title 'social worker' is neither reserved nor protected for those who have undergone social work training, as is the case in many countries that have legislative mechanisms for social work, for example South Africa. Many other people generally play those roles regardless of whether they have the requisite social work skills or not. The major reason for this is the general assumption that anyone trained in humanities and social sciences is no different from a professionally trained social worker. This further reveals the painful outcome of non-recognition of professional social work through legislative mechanisms in the country.

The PROSOWO study (Wairire *et al.*, 2014) revealed several other challenges that confront social workers in their practice as indicated in Table 7.2. The majority said inadequate resources to support social workers, inadequate number of social work professionals and poor policy planning which affects implementation of their programmes and services.

Table 7.2: Other challenges that confront social workers in their practice

Challenges as stated by social workers	Frequency	%
Inadequate resources to support social workers	128	44
Inadequate number of professional social workers	57	19.6
Poor policy planning and implementation	26	8.9
Lack of a professional body to regulate social work practice	25	8.6
Lack of government support in social work projects	11	3.8
Lack of knowledge on MDGs	9	3.1
Lack of appreciation of social work profession	8	2.7
Corruption by stakeholders	7	2.4
Cultural conflicts with agency programmes	5	1.7
Lack of adequate training materials	4	1.4
Lack of community participation in development issues	4	1.4
Lack of harmonised curriculum in both public and private institutions	4	1.4
Harsh environmental conditions for social workers	3	1
Cumulative Total	291	100

Source: Wairire *et al.* (2014)

Transcending the drawbacks for social work in Kenya

Several measures ought to be considered in order to improve the status of social work in Kenya. They require concerted efforts between social work educators in their training institutions, the practitioners themselves, and other stakeholders, including the government, both at the county and national levels, as well as the organisations that employ social workers. If carefully considered and implemented, the face of social work will not only change for the better but will also result in marked improvement in service delivery for holistic development of social work clientele.

This can begin with the training institutions themselves by putting in place very clear policies on who should teach social work, as well as their recruitment and staff development process. More funds for social work research need to be availed and social work academics facilitated to develop strong networks country-wide. This is essential for sustained

exchange of ideas, knowledge and information on social work developments taking place locally and globally. It would also be a strong forum where findings emanating from social work research can be shared amongst professional peers and other stakeholders.

There is also a dire need for the social work curriculum to be reviewed regularly in order to produce social work practitioners that not only understand the changing areas of social work concern as necessitated by global trends, but also prepare graduates to handle such issues adequately (Healy and Wairire, 2014). For better results, this may be done in consultation with social work practitioners on the ground who can inform academics on the trends taking place from time to time. Findings from sustained social work research may also help inform which areas of the social work curriculum need to be revised in order for the skills learnt in training institutions to be more relevant to practice.

Furthermore, there is a need for a strong social work body that can readily network with both practitioners and social work academics for concerted efforts to develop a sound ethical code for practitioners and educators. With time, it will be able to develop accreditation mechanisms for practicing social workers and thereby eliminate infiltration into the profession by people engaging in social work tasks but with no corresponding social work training. This has the potential to improve the visibility of social work in the country and to lay the groundwork for legislation and subsequent recognition.

It is pertinent to note that social work in Kenya can thrive much more once it is recognised as a profession and regulated in order to position itself as an indispensable role-player in social development. This recognition should be supported by a political mandate and directed by a specific social welfare policy embedded in a developmental approach. The political mandate must be drawn from broad national policies and legislation as well as specific legislation regulating the profession. Regulation of social work by law implies that government has a statutory obligation to develop social work and would, therefore, be more committed to develop the profession (Lombard and Wairire, 2010). This will further help in ensuring that specific social work roles are firmly executed by trained social work personnel both at the county and national levels.

Conclusion

Like many Third World nations in Africa today, the status of social work education and practice in Kenya is gradually improving. Its scope is broad and diverse yet its voice and presence have not been strongly felt, probably because compared to other disciplines and professions, there are a few social work institutions and practitioners. Several other factors beyond the social workers themselves may be responsible for the existing state of social work education and practice in the country. There is a need for more research to identify such factors out of which much more meaningful interventions can be conceptualised to promote the profession. The outcomes of the recently conducted research through the PROSOWO project (Wairire *et al.*, 2014) may provide the impetus to change the current status of social work in Kenya. The challenges highlighted in this chapter, if properly addressed by all stakeholders in the social work domain including the government, social work educators, social work practitioners and agencies that employ them, have a potential to make social work in Kenya bright and promising.

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The Status of Social Work Education and Practice in Rwanda

Charles Kalinganire and Charles Rutikanga

Introduction

Social work is a profession that strives to enhance the well-being of the people. It is a “humanising profession that aims to change the conditions of the people through appropriate action” (Potgieter, 1998, 4). The International Federation of Social Workers’ (IFSW) definition of social work, adopted in 2000, specifies that:

The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work. (IFSW, 2012)

From this fundamental orientation, it is clear that generalist or specialist social workers should be well equipped and thus possess thorough knowledge and skills in order to fulfil adequately their role of “helping people” within their environment instead of focusing simply on personal traits (Fook, 2012, 4).

The main preoccupation today in developing countries and in Africa, in particular, remains to discern the kind of training that could help to have qualified social work professionals capable of intervening in a way that clients take control of their own lives and gain the power to shape their own future. In this perspective, the key challenging questions, namely, whether it is useful to continue to rely upon the Western models in the training institutions or whether it is possible to initiate independent models deriving from indigenous patterns, has not found appropriate responses yet. In Rwanda, social work as a profession is still very young, and many people have taken on the role of social workers especially in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide when interventions became crucial.

In this chapter, the authors discuss the status of social work education and practice in Rwanda. An attempt has been made to respond to the following questions:

- Why is there a need for the Rwandan society to have social work?
- To what extent are social work education and practice appropriate and responsive to the Rwandan context?

- Is it possible to develop indigenous education and practice?
- How do social workers in Rwanda adapt imported ideas to fit local needs?

On the whole, the authors relate the genesis and evolution of social work in Rwanda, highlighting the social work intervention domains and identifying the main challenges faced in social work education and practice. Furthermore, they discuss and explore the strategies (with a focus on locally developed strategies) and perspectives for the promotion of the profession, relying particularly on the strengthening of the social welfare workforce trained on the basis of a well-thought and integrated curriculum and the establishment of social work organs such as the Rwanda National Association of Social Workers.

In Rwanda, very little documentation on social work is available, therefore, it was crucial to explore different unpublished papers, conference presentations, social work students' dissertations and course notes. It is also important to mention that observations made throughout the supervision of social work students during their regular field practices or internships helped enormously in shaping the thinking about the future of social work. This chapter is divided into five main points as follows:

- Foundations and functions of social work;
- The Rwandan socioeconomic and political context;
- Social work education in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide;
- Contribution of the social work profession towards the reconstruction of Rwanda;
- Challenges and way forward for social work training and practice in Rwanda.

Foundations and functions of social work

Adams, Dominelli and Payne (1998) specify that social work is necessary and contributes to the maintenance of social order. From a humanist perspective, the function of social work is to help to maintain the fabric of society, a fabric that would otherwise be brittle and likely to fracture. Indeed, from its emergence by well-known figures, including Jane Addams, 1910, in USA and Mary Richmond, 1922, in England, the central tenets of social work have been based on the desire to solve people's social problems and help them adjust to their environment, with a particular focus on helping vulnerable and oppressed groups in society. In this perspective, Seabury *et al.* (2011, 9) argue that:

The ultimate measure of the success of social work activity is the well-being of individuals within their environments. These environments range from the most immediate, such as friends and family; to larger entities, such as the workplace, neighborhoods, and the surrounding community; and finally to the largest systems, such as the state or the country. In working to create optimal interactions between individuals and their environments, at times social workers will be helping individuals to change, at other times helping to make environmental change, and most often working to change the transactions between individuals and their environments.

Social workers are considered as change agents who intervene at micro, mezzo and macro level with the aim of uplifting people's lives. As shown by Zastrow (2004), social workers act as enablers, brokers, advocates, activists, mediators, negotiators, teachers,

initiators, empowerers, coordinators and researchers. Their roles can vary from country to country according to prevailing situations (political, economic, cultural, and so on). In Rwanda, a social worker is considered as *Umuhuza* (coordinator), *Umukangurambaga* (animator of the community), *Umufasha w'abatishoboye* (helper of vulnerable groups), *Umuhoza* (somebody who provides consolation) and *Ruburirabose* (somebody who acts in a preventive manner) (University College Cork, 1999, 4). In the past, the micro-level intervention models have dominated the Western societies, and their diffusion in the global South was believed to be both helpful and appropriate. However, since the 1960s/1970s, various criticisms were raised, contradicting this consideration as shown by the following citation taken from Midgley (2008, 32):

They [the critics] challenged the widely held view that social work was based on universal values and beliefs and that its practice methods were applicable to all societies. Instead, they argued that social work's universal values reflected a Western, liberal world view that was incompatible with the indigenous culture of developing nations. Accordingly, they urged the formulation and adoption of theories and practice methods based on indigenous cultural realities.

The guiding assumption here supports and stresses the shift from the residual/remedial approach to the social development paradigm that seems to be more suitable in addressing the needs of the majority of the population; otherwise educators and practitioners in developing countries and Africa, in particular, will continue to deal with symptoms and not with the real causes of social problems. To well understand the core component of the following sections, it is important to keep in mind that the authors prefer the developmental perspective and, considering the Rwandan socioeconomic and political context, they demonstrate the relevance of social work in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide. Under the circumstances of a post-genocide society, it is essential that social work students and practitioners are equipped with adequate knowledge and skills targeting mainly structural aspects instead of individualised clients' problems, although the latter should not be neglected, given the magnitude of traumatic experiences many people have gone through.

The Rwandan socioeconomic and political context

Rwanda is a landlocked country situated in central Africa with an area of 26,340 square kilometres. Also known as "the land of a thousand hills", Rwanda has five volcanoes, 23 lakes and numerous rivers, some forming the source of the River Nile. The country lies 75 miles south of the equator, 880 miles "as the crow flies" west of the Indian Ocean and 1,250 miles east of the Atlantic Ocean – literally in the heart of Africa. Rwanda is bordered by Uganda to the north, Tanzania to the east, Burundi to the south and the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west.¹

Rwanda has suffered from tyranny in the past. In the 20th century, the country was trapped in a vicious circle of apparently inextricable problems (colonisation followed by sociopolitical instabilities, economic dependence, sociocultural disintegration and food insecurity) that culminated in the atrocious 1994 genocide, with up to one million people, mainly Tutsi, killed. The genocide shredded the social fabric of Rwandan society;

¹ Information retrieved from: <http://www.gov.rw> [accessed 18 September 2012].

decimated families; and greatly reduced the capacity of communities to meet their own needs. Among the lasting legacies of this genocide were the increase of vulnerable groups (orphans, widows, traumatised people, elderly, disabled, displaced, street children and prisoners) and the worsening of poverty. Globally, Rwanda became known in 1994 to the whole world as “the scene of the last genocide of the 20th century” (Murigande, 2012, 2).

In this situation of total breakdown and despair, it was deemed urgent to undertake the journey of reconstruction relying greatly on “broad and inclusive-based governance”. Since then, the population has been involved in the socioeconomic and political processes of the country. This has helped to move steadily towards sustainable development. Rwanda that ‘rose from the ashes’ after the genocide, is now gaining a good reputation throughout the world as shown briefly below.

Rwanda has impressed the world and continues to defy the odds; it has become a unique case in the region in terms of achievements in the process of improving people’s lives. In fact, through the use of innovative institutional reforms, the Rwandan government has been able to achieve unprecedented progress since 1994. Today, the Rwandan government is internationally recognised for its achievements in poverty reduction, gender equality, reconstruction and reconciliation, universal primary education, access to health care and a continuous commitment to culturally based initiatives (such as *Gacaca* courts as a means of justice and reconciliation and *Ubudehe*, a community programme based on the tradition of mutual assistance) that deliver results for every Rwandan and the use of technology to improve the lives of every citizen.

Using the MDGs indicators as key references to estimate the development process of Rwanda, it is evident that the country has demonstrated exceptional determination and capacities in handling the devastating effects of the genocide as well as the structural socioeconomic problems. The country has experienced a significant economic transformation which has translated into alleviating poverty and improving the lives of Rwandans. According to the Republic of Rwanda (2013), the real growth of the gross domestic product increased from 2.2% in 2003 to 7.2% in 2010 with a peak growth of 11.5% in 2008. Overall, the average growth rate has been 7%. This was achieved through the long-term economic development plan, Vision 2020, and its medium-term strategy, the Economic Development Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) which gives a clear direction on how to move from poverty to a middle-income country. From Vision 2020, a blend of programmes and policies have been formulated and implemented in several key sectors – agriculture, investment, tourism and information and communication technology (ICT). In 2007, the Crop Intensification Programme was launched as part of the Integrated Development Programme which transformed the agriculture sector. The programme aimed to consolidate land and cultivate a limited number of crops (the ones most adapted to the region) and to increase the use of fertilisers and improved seeds. This resulted in the growth of the agricultural sector by 7.6% in 2010 against 2.7% in 2007. This programme was also complemented by the policy of ‘one cow per poor family’ – targeting the neediest Rwandans (all data taken from Republic of Rwanda, 2013).

Given all this, the Minister of Finance and Economic Planning, as quoted by Bundugu (2012),² declared: "... economic growth has benefited most to the poorest households and poverty reduction has been faster in rural areas as opposed to just urban centres; this means that inequality has significantly reduced". Poverty in Rwanda has dropped by 11.8% since 2006. This is at a rate of six times faster than the country achieved between 2000 and 2006, according to the third Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey (EICV)³. Findings from the same survey show that 45% of the population now live below the poverty line compared to 57% five years ago. The survey also shows that infant and maternal mortality rates have declined by 41% and 35% respectively since 2006, while participation in secondary level education has doubled over that time.

Such achievements are due to several factors including the support of both bilateral and multilateral partners. Most importantly, it is crucial to keep in mind that the success should also be attributed to the involvement of the Rwandan citizens in the problem-solving process and their conviction that they must be masters of their destiny for the advancement towards sustainable social development.

Throughout all these transformations, one can ask what the role of social work has been. Although it is quite difficult to list social workers' achievements separately since their roles were often occupied by other professionals, social work's contribution in uplifting people's living conditions at micro, mezzo and macro levels with a focus on macro intervention is paramount. This is demonstrated in the following sections, dealing particularly with social work and its status at a glance.

Social work education and practice in Rwanda: Genesis and relevance in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide

Social work, as a professional discipline, emerged formally in Rwanda in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide. It was in fact in 1998 that the National University of Rwanda – in the context of dealing with the complex social problems fuelled by the effects of the genocide – initiated a bachelor's degree programme in social work. The programme started as a means to promote the psycho-social well-being of children affected by trauma and other effects of the 1994 genocide.

Since its beginning, the programme has mainly followed Western models with the assistance of social workers from abroad such as Mrs Mathilde Kimenyi, a Rwandan from the diaspora based in the United States of America. The programme has sought to promote human rights and social justice; to reach sustainable development in reference to the national policies; and to improve the social welfare of Rwandans on the whole. Students on this programme are trained with the goal of providing them with knowledge and skills that will help them to compete at national, regional and international levels. But most importantly, they are expected to serve the people in their local communities. The first intake of ten students graduated in December 2002, and by 2011, around 600 graduates had qualified as professionally trained social workers.

² Bundugu Eric is the Ministry of Finance's agent who reported on the launch of EDPRS-2 on 6 February, 2012 on <http://www.minecofin.gov.rw/ministry/key/edprs> [accessed on 8 December 2012].

³ The EICV-3 was conducted by the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) in 2011.

The programme has gone through a number of reviews to standardise it. In 2007 the social work programme was reshaped from the course system to the current modular system to fit the requirements of the Higher Education Council (HEC) under the auspices of the Ministry of Education. The revision was based on a number of social work programmes from different training institutions both within Africa and other regions. However, it still needs some improvements to meet the International Social Work Education Standards, as adopted in 2004 in Adelaide, Australia (Sewpaul and Jones, 2004).

Additional social work programmes were initiated by two private higher education institutions in the country: in 2006, by the Institut Polytechnique de Byumba under the Department of Social Sciences and in 2010, by the Catholic University of Rwanda. The latter hosts two specialisations, namely child and family studies as well as welfare and social development.

It is evident that social work programmes in all these institutions are very young and need to be strengthened. In this respect, the National University of Rwanda (renamed University of Rwanda in 2013) chose to undertake partnerships with specific universities, including Tulane University School of Social Work, York University and Carinthia University of Applied Sciences from Austria. The latter collaborates with a number of higher learning institutions in East Africa: University of Nairobi, Makerere University, University of Rwanda, the Institute of Social Work, Dar es Salaam, and Hope Africa University in Burundi. These partnerships have helped to progressively shape the social work training and practice through specific activities such as the initiation of a Certificate Programme in Psychosocial Support for People Living with HIV/AIDS (by Tulane School of Social Work); the establishment of the Centre for Social Work Education and Practice (CSWEP) (by York University) as a means to strengthen the programme within the department; and the promotion of social work research in poverty reduction (under the auspices of Carinthia University). Another opportunity linked with this partnership is the possibility of capacity-building through specific social work workshops, participation in international conferences and study tours. All this helps in the sharing of experiences with different persons, to opening horizons and confronting Western social work models with local realities.

Overall, social work educators and students benefit a lot from such synergies as it becomes possible for them to understand the need to strengthen social work education and practice in their universities. That is why, for example, at the University of Rwanda, it is believed that the effective functioning of the CSWEP will be helpful for them as expressed below in two quotations by a lecturer and a student, respectively:

We need to develop social work in Rwanda. If the centre [for Social Work Education and Practice] is established, it will be one of the bridges to have skilled social workers in terms of research, capacity-building, designing education programmes and addressing community needs, since it will be covering the largest part of the community. (Social work educator, University of Rwanda)

Now, we, social work students, are going to have our laboratory where to practise the theories learnt in class. (Social work student, University of Rwanda)⁴

Social work educators and students are convinced that theory and practice may be combined in the hope of ensuring the training of well-qualified social work professionals. Thus it is important to keep in mind that: "The University has to be alert to societal changes, to changing trends and to discoveries... In this way the University and the field remain inescapably interdependent." (Hoffmann, 1990, 11) But it is also important to think of models of social work practice that "... directly address the needs of the country, respond to the culture of the people and focus on pertinent social issues" (Gray and Fook, 2002, 364).

In terms of education programmes, it is thus fundamental to strengthen social work training according to the national policies that privilege community work interventions. Indeed and as stated by Kalinganire (2002, 141-142), there is a general consensus among social work educators and practitioners that for the best transformation of the country, a *grassroots participation* in decision-making and an effective *empowerment of all groups* have first and foremost to be promoted. In this perspective, *community work*, mainly based on a *community development model*, is considered one of the vital pillars and thus a very suitable method in the achievement of major new government policy initiatives. In fact, it can be employed as a means to achieving maximum outputs in social intervention domains. Furthermore, it should revive the traditional *solidarity practice* and hence, reinforce *social capital* that is a veritable source of building a sense of community.

Concrete contribution of social work towards the reconstruction of Rwanda

Overall, social workers in Rwanda have been dealing with various social, economic, legal, psychological and even political problems as they are employed in various settings. Social work functions in Rwanda include planning, organising, supervision, advocacy, counselling, administration, research and programme evaluation (cf. Rwomire and Radithhokwa, 1996). The following main problems have been capturing their attention:

- The mental and psychological effects of witnessing violence or death on survivors of war and genocide;
- The threat of poverty;
- A lack of trust between different groups in the community and problems of reconciliation and unity;
- The reintegration of large numbers of children into the community;
- The breakdown of many family and social structures; and
- The HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The roles played by the social work professionals take multiple forms including particularly:

⁴ Interviews conducted during a workshop on strengthening social work in Rwanda held from 8th to 9th December 2010 in Huye, Rwanda.

- Counselling, conflict management, healing and reconciliation processes through their interventions in *Gacaca* courts. On this point, Kabera and Sewpaul (2008) refer to the multiple roles social workers play in these courts: providing an oversight function; ensuring that the hearings are fair and impartial; conducting field visits to obtain collateral information to verify information provided during the hearings; securing legal assistance for alleged perpetrators and victims where necessary; and doing on-site debriefing and support for victims as the hearings engender a great deal of emotional trauma;
- Participation in the revitalisation of the favoured traditional/indigenous practices or mechanisms that help to address specific social problems such as combating poverty through *Ubudehe* or other home-grown initiatives such as *Girinka* (one cow per poor family) and *Umuganda* (community development activities executed every last Saturday of the month);
- Handling genocide ideology and reconciliation problems through various sensitisation campaigns as well as group or public meetings;
- Advocacy in favour of different vulnerable people such as battered women, orphans, children living on the street, the elderly and mental health sufferers;
- Networking and coordinating activities for displaced people or in refugee camps; and
- Community-based interventions for collective action and sustainable development using social mobilisation methods.

In their responses to the 1994 genocide, social workers have been using multi-level approaches and corresponding methods (casework, group work and community development). Social workers' interventions are of great necessity and, basing to their achievements so far, there are reasons to be confident about the future of the profession. In fact, as expressed by the parliamentarian Nyirabega (2011), social workers shall be catalysts to underpin all public and private sector activities to enable Rwanda's Vision 2020 to be attained. She specified that social workers are expected to help in:

building a think-tank bridge between the government and the population; fostering awareness on human rights and human life; highlighting the appropriate policy making strategies; picturing hope in the face of poverty towards positive action; being the voice of the voiceless. (ibid.)

In the same way, a social work student declares:

Even though there are some people who continue to misunderstand, ignore or denigrate the importance of social work, we are realising today that the profession is being welcomed in different settings, and palpable facts are visible. In fact, social workers are well appreciated by different clients who got the opportunity to benefit from their services. Among these clients are widows, genocide survivors, HIV/AIDS patients, poor families, orphans and the elderly.⁵

It is important to note that professional social workers are faced with the difficult task of constantly adapting to the ever-changing needs of the society and thus they need to be well

⁵ Interview with a 4th year social work student in a one-day workshop held at NUR on 12th August 2011.

informed and skilful. They play an important role in linking beneficiaries to appropriate care and services. As Rwanda continues to improve service delivery for vulnerable populations, the advancement of social work offers the opportunity to provide a holistic approach to addressing the needs of people living with HIV/AIDS, people living in poverty, victims of gender-based violence, orphans and vulnerable children, and other at-risk populations.

Social work education and practice in Rwanda has improved greatly over the past few years. Despite different impediments, the profession is gaining credibility on various platforms. It now features in job announcements, and some well-informed agencies have started to recruit social work graduates at university campuses. What is most fortunate is that social work is benefiting from the conducive sociopolitical environment that has developed in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide.

Overall, social work in Rwanda is progressively being marketed for the firm observance of its universal values of human rights and social justice using particular knowledge and skills especially to “ensure fairness and equity for the downtrodden and marginalised in society” as expressed by social work leaders such as Mary Richmond and Eileen Younghusband (Raniga and Kasiram, 2010, 270). However, many challenges remain. These challenges, together with corresponding recommendations, are dealt with in the next section.

Challenges and way forward for social work training and practice in Rwanda

Like in many other African countries, the social work profession is not widely recognised in Rwanda. By embracing Jones’ words in Raniga and Kasiram (2010, 270) where it is stated that “since its inception social work has been marked by a long process of struggle for legitimacy and acceptance”, it is opportune to mention that social work needs to improve its professional standing and to assert its uniqueness. The profession has an important role to play in light of a growing demand for social services, the changing development scenarios and prevalent poverty and other social problems resulting from the genocide. Training opportunities are inadequate and the profession is under-resourced in terms of staff, infrastructure and academic capacities (four social work faculty members out of seven at the University of Rwanda are currently studying in Sweden following a sandwich programme system).

Another issue as pointed out by Hardiman and Midgley (1982) is that social work training in developing countries is dominated by theories inherited from developed countries. This dependence on foreign methodologies often leads to many social work graduates not having satisfactory skills to work in statutory interventions after qualifying. This is equally mirrored in the fact that materials students and educators use are from outside Africa. Literature translated into local contexts is almost non-existent.

In Rwanda, there is no legal framework that would provide proper regulations for the profession to be recognised, and the term “social worker” is thus not protected. The Rwanda National Association of Social Workers (RWA-NASW) has been in place for years but has not been sufficiently organised and resourced to influence the development of policies and participate in different strategies that aim to prevent social problems. In order to

make a functional framework, the Rwanda Social Work Advisory Group (RWA-SWAG)⁶ was formed to strengthen the national association. Currently, the national association is reorganising itself to be able to perform all the roles it should be performing, assisted by the RWA-SWAG.

There is a lack of highly qualified academic staff trained in social work (MSW and PhD) at all the social work training institutions in Rwanda. This is likely due to the fact that the social work profession is new in Rwanda and many of the lecturers studied in other fields. All the social work higher learning institutions in Rwanda also have limited social work related materials such as text books, journals, social work-related DVDs and articles.

Student field placements are also a very big challenge to social work training in Rwanda. Most social work students in Rwanda carry out their field placements in the nearest agencies because if they are posted far from their universities, they and their families cannot afford the attendant costs. Because of this challenge, students go for field placements that are available, but not necessarily in their field of interest. In addition, some agencies do not have qualified professional social work staff to mentor students.

Therefore, it is time and opportune to provide social work students and practitioners with knowledge and skills that fit adequately into their local realities. As expressed by Chikadzi and Pretorius (2011, 255), "it is important to develop a multicultural curriculum, with an emphasis on African [Rwandan] culture... The social work curricula need to shift from a Western axis to an African [Rwandan] one that takes into account diverse local realities." In terms of field instruction, it is crucial to think of the interdependence between training institutions and field instructors. In this respect, Strydom (2002, 287) states that:

The possibility of concluding formal agreements with welfare organisations on the practice education of students should be considered more seriously in order to ensure that the welfare organisation draws the maximum benefits from the placement by initiating co-operative projects that will also be advantageous for the training institution... Training institutions must realise the importance of training field instructors and should determine the needs of field instructors in this respect. In order to recognise the services rendered by field instructors, the training institution needs to consider what concrete fringe benefits it can offer.

Based on the above arguments, there is a need to train field instructors on social work field supervision to solve this problem, and this should be done regularly to keep them up to date on developments and new models of practice as their role is considerable in the educational and professional growth and development of students. The relationship between social work training institutions and field agencies is weak for many reasons. Very often, students are requested to find field placements by themselves and because of limited financial resources, they may or may not be visited by supervising lecturers from their department while on their field practice.

Another challenge for social work education and practice in Rwanda is the absence of a field education manual for lecturers, field instructors and students to organise and conduct

⁶ RWA-SWAG is composed of both social work practitioners and academics from the three national schools of social work who gathered for the Social Work Framework Development Workshop in Kigali, 21 to 23 March 2011.

successful student field education. While such a document for students does exist at the schools of social work, not much detail is provided.

To avoid the pitfalls of the past, including the blind importation of solutions to local problems, three critical questions with regard to social work education and training in Africa raised by Asamoah (1994) should be asked in the case of Rwanda: 1. What tasks need to be performed to lead to improvement of the human condition and meeting of welfare needs? 2. What kinds of personnel are needed to perform these tasks? 3. How should social workers be trained?

In improving social work education and practice in Rwanda, these questions are very relevant. Sometimes social work curricula are reviewed without basing on any study but rather on what reviewers think is needed. Usually, the review is done by only educators without involving other key stakeholders such as social work practitioners. While answering the above questions there is a need to involve as many stakeholders as possible as they are also part of realising the issues raised by these questions. The curricula in social work training institutions need to be reviewed and improved, ensuring that they meet international standards.

Based on the discussion above, and for a better future of social work education and practice in Rwanda, the following recommendations should be taken into consideration:

- Refining the teaching curricula with focus on a social development paradigm;
- Hastening the capacity-building of social work academic staff;
- Strengthening the Centre for Social Work Education and Practice initiated two years ago;
- Reviving the National Association of Social Workers;
- Strengthening participation in regional and international professional networks (such as becoming members of the International Association of Schools of Social Work and the Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa);
- Continuing to develop and maintain partnerships with other universities and organisations;
- Continuing to advocate the improvement of social work field practice;
- Promoting synergies with welfare agencies, administrative instances and local communities,
- Introducing a Master of Social Work (MSW);
- Initiating certificate and diploma programmes with the aim of improving the quality of the social welfare workforce;
- Reviewing current social work curricula to make sure that they meet international standards; and
- Professionalising and regulating the social work profession in the country.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have sought to explore the genesis, evolution and role of social work in Rwanda. It has been shown that the profession was formalised in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide, especially with the emergence of the academic programmes in the Department of Social Sciences at the National University of Rwanda and later in other private higher education institutions. In fact, the progressive increase of qualified social workers has served to respond, to some extent, to some gaps in the labour market – but it is important to note that their recruitment remains low and, thus, there is a need to market the profession.

Despite the reluctance or scepticism of some people or organisations that denigrate social work and continue to undervalue it, it is positive to note that it is being progressively cherished in different settings. Social work has been active at micro and mezzo levels in helping to resolve issues that various categories of clients face, and to create societal macro changes that prevent or alleviate multiple problems of individuals, families, groups and communities. Social workers have contributed appreciably to the Rwandan reconstruction process by addressing the consequences of the 1994 genocide and various other structural or emerging social problems such as poverty, genocide ideology and social conflicts.

Last but not least, it is opportune to mention that the profession still faces various challenges including particularly its low recognition. In fact, “social workers are frustrated by the popular misconception regarding their status, and by the fact that people still limit the social workers’ role to the accomplishment of charitable activities only” (Kalinganire, 2002, 98). In this article, several recommendations were made to upgrade and professionalise social work in Rwanda. But social workers themselves must keep in mind that they themselves have an important role to play in this process and thus improve their professional standing in society. For this to happen, they are “not asked to do extraordinary things but to act extraordinarily well” (Kalinganire, 2002, 144).

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The Development of Social Work Education and Practice in Tanzania

Zena M. Mabeyo

Introduction

Accounts of the history of social work show that there are several distinct patterns of the evolution of the profession (Healy, 2012, 56). In the African experience, the development of modern social welfare and social work is a result of colonialism (Mwansa and Kreitzer, 2012, 394). Teaching the history of social work in Africa has relied on a European perspective with little attention paid to how social supports evolved in Africa (Kreitzer, 2012, 2). In the European and American contexts, the profession developed to address the human needs that grew out of the industrial revolution (Healy, 2012, 55). However, irrespective of the varied patterns of evolution, the profession continues to be committed to the promotion of human rights and social justice, focusing on the marginalised and vulnerable people (Hare, 2004; IFSW, 2010). It is a profession that is change-oriented and envisioned towards ensuring that meaningful changes in people's lives are attained. The ever-emerging new and complex forms of socioeconomic, political, cultural and technological changes and problems that interfere with people's lives and their patterns of relations continue to demand the intervention of qualified social workers.

Despite its commitment and contribution in creating positives changes in people's lives, the profession is not adequately known and hence not fully utilised in Tanzania. Many challenges prevent it from being visible and accessible to a significant number of those in need. Yet, not much has been documented in Tanzania regarding this noble profession.

To bridge this gap, this chapter presents an overview of the origin and development of social work education and practice in Tanzania. The socioeconomic context of the country and the extent to which the profession contributes towards the realisation of social development and poverty reduction is highlighted. New developments in the profession are also presented. Finally, the guiding approach and challenges of the profession are highlighted.

Tanzania: The social and economic context

Tanzania has an estimated population of 43 million people. The country has a high population growth rate with an average fertility rate of 5.4 children per woman (United

Republic of Tanzania [URT], 2011). Despite the high fertility rate, the country can be best described as composed of a considerably young population due to the fact that the life expectancy rate of the Tanzanian population is 58.9 years at birth (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2013).

Just like other developing countries, Tanzania is an agrarian economy (National Bureau of Statistics Tanzania and ICF Macro, 2011). It is also predominantly rural and the agricultural sector is the main employer. According to the 2010 Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey (URT, 2011), 69% of women and 62% of men are engaged in agricultural activities. The country is among the poorest in the world. The 2013 human development report (UNDP, 2013) places Tanzania at 152nd position out of 187 countries with low human development. Despite various national and international efforts to eradicate poverty, the majority of Tanzanians continue to be poor. Most recent data (UNDP, 2013) indicates that 65.6% of Tanzanians live in multidimensional poverty while an additional 21% were vulnerable to multiple deprivations by 2010. The same source estimates that 50% or more of the Tanzanian population live in severe poverty. The general poverty context adds a lot to the demand for social welfare services. Yet, inadequate efforts are taken to address this demand.

As a consequence of being poor, Tanzania is faced by a number of problems whose solutions require the efforts of different professionals, including social workers. One of the serious problems facing the country is the HIV/AIDS epidemic which largely affects the young and most energetic population group. Findings from the 2007-2008 National HIV/AIDS and Malaria Indicator Survey (Tanzania Commission for AIDS *et al.*, 2008) indicate that 5.7% of the adult population is infected by HIV/AIDS with the ill-fated effects touching almost everybody. The pandemic has contributed to growing death tolls, trauma, grief and a higher number of orphans and other vulnerable children than the country has ever experienced. The same source indicates that in terms of general mortality, the HIV/AIDS pandemic is estimated to be next to Malaria (22%), with up to 17% of total death cases.

With the existence of multifaceted problems, the social work profession in Tanzania must assume very important roles in addressing poverty, empowering communities, and restoring people's problem-solving and coping capacities. Realising this, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through its American International Health Alliance (AIHA), has taken deliberate measures since 2006 to support activities and programmes which will eventually lead to strengthening social work practice and education in Tanzania (Nakaka, 2013). Notably, through its HIV/AIDS Twinning Center, AIHA has established a capacity-building partnership between the Institute of Social Work (ISW) in Dar es Salaam and the Jane Addams College of Social Work and the Midwest Aids Training and Education Center at the University of Illinois in Chicago. Through this partnership and in collaboration with the Tanzania Human Resource Capacity Project, the above partners have to date trained more than 4,026 para-social workers (PSWs), 642 PSW supervisors, and 103 master trainers across the country in order to produce a cadre

of para-social workers who would be able to bridge the deficit between the actual and the required number of social workers in the country.

The above training programme was meant to create a social workforce that can be deployed at the rural grassroots level, thus reaching the remote needy groups. Moreover, AIHA and the partners also support the development and standardisation of a social work curriculum across 12 universities through the Tanzania Emerging Schools of Social Work Programme (TESWEP). AIHA and partners have also revitalised and are working to strengthen the capacity of the Tanzania Association of Social Workers (TASWO), a national professional association for social workers (Nakaka, 2013).

As a result of the above support, TASWO has set a historic professional benchmark by spearheading and facilitating the formation process of a Social Work Council and Bill. The move has the in full support of the Tanzanian government. While addressing the annual general meeting of social workers on 16 October 2012, the Minister for Health and Social Welfare, Hussein Ally Mwinyi, assured the Association of the government's support in this process (Mkama, 2012). These are important milestones towards the development of the profession in Tanzania that are worth documenting.

Tanzania's poverty reduction strategies and the development agenda

Three dimensions of extreme poverty—namely: income poverty, human development poverty and social exclusion—have been central concepts in the development of social work over the past century. However, the effects of poverty are often reflected in a multitude of the vulnerable groups such as youths, children, women, the elderly, disabled, refugees, migrants, and the homeless. Besides living in conditions of poverty, these categories of the population lack adequate social protection and security. Consequently, they lack access to a decent and dignified life. They are marginally excluded from improved health, education and sanitation. Yet their voices are not fully heard in mainstream social policy circles.

Although not precisely mainstreamed into the social welfare programmes, efforts to fight against poverty and ensure equity and equality in the lives of all Tanzanians have a long history. They were first laid by the founding president of the United Republic of Tanzania, the late Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere. Soon after independence in 1961, the president laid his socialist vision of *ujamaa* which was viewed as the basis for equitable economic production and distribution (Ibhawoh and Dibua, 2003). Although his economic policies were deemed to have failed, his other policies such as those of education and health recorded success. Coupled with other technological and administrative weaknesses, the failure of economic policies dwindled the economy and the gap between the rich and the poor continued to gradually increase. Therefore, the number of the marginalised populations has also increased. However, during the implementation of those economic policies, Tanzania's literacy rate surpassed that of many African countries.

From the early 1980s to date, Tanzania has developed various policies and strategies to tackle poverty. Guided by its Development Vision 2025 (President's Office, Planning Commission, 1999) and commitment to realise the Millennium Development Goals, Tanzania developed two National Strategies for Growth and Reduction of Poverty policy papers each of which spread over a five-year period. These poverty reduction strategy

papers are commonly known by Swahili acronyms as MKUKUTA I (URT, 2005) and MKUKUTA II (URT, 2010). The two policies provide country-specific operational targets for poverty reduction through three major cluster areas which focus on: (i) growth and reduction of income poverty; (ii) improved quality of lives and social well-being for the vulnerable groups, and (iii) good governance and accountability. After implementation of MKUKUTA I, not very significant improvements were achieved in income growth for the various population groups including the rural population, hence, MKUKUTA II still set targets geared towards the overall goal of reduction of income poverty. Within this context, the role of social workers in the fight against poverty in Tanzania remains unclear, underestimated and invisible and yet the profession could play a significant role in contributing towards the attainment of long-term goals of poverty reduction through ensuring that special government efforts are directed to address the three dimensions of poverty among the marginalised and disadvantaged groups. Diversification of roles of social workers to address developmental challenges in the country should be an issue of priority.

Tanzania's Department of Social Welfare is the government organ responsible for overseeing and supervising the social welfare service delivery. The department holds that adoption of a developmental approach (developmental social work) in dealing with clients' problems can effectively contribute towards reduction of pervasive and extreme poverty. The department theoretically stresses that, in order for the social work profession to be able to appropriately respond to and solve clients' contemporary problems, there is a need to reduce its reliance on the traditional, conventional welfarism approaches and act more proactively to the social welfare services demands (Ministry of Health and Social Welfare 2007, 9). This entails adoption and application of developmental approaches. This theoretical orientation is in line with what Mupedziswa (2001) stresses regarding adoption of a developmental conceptual model in Africa.

Drawing from writers in the field of developmental social work, the approach is seen as a type of social work which affirms the social work profession's commitment to the eradication of poverty as well as an investment in human capital rather than a drain on limited resources to single out marginalised groups (cf. Midgley and Conley, 2010; Mupedziswa, 2001). The Tanzanian government also aspires towards improved lives and living standards of its citizens. A developmental/anti-poverty slogan that was used by the fourth president of the United Republic of Tanzania, Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, during his 2005 presidential campaigns and post-election period was *Maisha bora kwa kila mtanzania*, literally meaning "improved living standard for every Tanzanian". This shows the degree of political commitment and willingness to improve the social well-being and standard of life of the citizens. However, the question which remains unanswered is: How will the dream for improved living standards be reached without directing efforts towards empowerment and strengthening the capacities of the vulnerable, poor, marginalised and other forgotten groups in societies? The needs of these groups can be well met through improved economic and social welfare services, ensuring adequate social protection and by strengthening the roles of social workers in the country. Moreover, without ensuring

that these groups are well protected, the dream of transforming Tanzania into a country that has graduated from “a least” to a “middle” income one by 2025 will be far from reach.

The International Federation of Social Workers’ (IFSW, 2010) policy on *Poverty Eradication and the Role of Social Workers* points out the importance of consultation and involvement of poor individuals, families and other population groups in poverty eradication. The same source also stresses the importance of government collaboration with different stakeholders in the fight against poverty. It is, therefore, timely and appropriate for the role and place of social work to be evident in poverty eradication programmes, strategies, policies, plans and budgets. Deliberate efforts are also required to ensure that comprehensive and universal social protection for the marginalised groups as recommended by Spitzer, Rwegoshora and Mabeyo (2009) and Spitzer and Mabeyo (2011) is provided. To realise this, social workers have a crucial role to play.

The history of social work education in Tanzania

Social welfare structures and educational resources vary in terms of the existence of social institutions such as ministries of social welfare as well as academic institutions to train competent workers (Linsk *et al.*, 2010). Burke and Ngonyani (2004) observe that in Tanzania, societal recognition of the value of professional training in social work is not wide. This relates partly to the fact that social work training has a narrow coverage and a relatively short history in Tanzania. It directly relates to the history of the Institute of Social Work (ISW) which was established by an Act of Parliament number 3 of 1973 that was subsequently amended under the written Laws (miscellaneous Amendment) Act No 3 of 2002. The Institute can, therefore, be considered the mother and the founder school of social work education and training in the country. From the early 1970s to the mid-2000s, ISW was the sole public school that offered courses in the field of social work in the country. The rationale for the establishment of the Institute was to respond to the government demand for trained social welfare officers who would help to address various social problems facing the country at that time. Prior to 2005, the Institute offered training in the field of social work, human resources management and labour studies and at levels of certificate advanced diploma and post-graduate diplomas. With the establishment of the national body of accreditation for technical awards termed as National Council for Technical Education (NACTE) in 1997, the Institute was eligible for registration to offer competence-based training programmes from certificate and ordinary diploma to bachelor’s degree levels. Although the Institute also offers courses in other fields such as human resources management and industrial relations, its competitive edge rests on its expertise and long experience in providing social work training at the mentioned levels. So far, the Institute has expanded from having a social work student population of less than 100 in 1974 to above 2,000 in 2012. The growing size of the student population partly indicates that there is an increased awareness and growing demand for professional social workers in the country.

However, with effect from 2010 there has been an outstanding expansion and advancements in social work education. TESWEP initiatives have significantly changed the face of social work education and training in Tanzania. In his speech during the launch

of the Master of Social Work programme at the Open University of Tanzania on 26 February 2013¹ and TESWEP annual general meeting, the Chairman of TESWEP, Naftali Ng'ondi, highlighted that the programme has been able to bring together and professionally support 12 schools that intend to or offer social work training programmes to standardise their programmes and curriculum in line with nationally and internationally agreed social work standards. This initiative has resulted into the establishment of two master's degree programmes in the field of social work at the Open University of Tanzania and Hubert Kairuki Memorial University (HKMU). These programmes have set a turning point in the profession as the country is able, for the first time, to train social workers at advanced level.

The history of social work practice in Tanzania

Professional social work practice has a relatively long history in Tanzania. Social work in Tanzania dates back to 1947, following the introduction of probation services by the British colonialists (Njimba, 2011). By the nature of the initial social welfare programmes, the profession was primarily introduced as a means of social control that helped to transform the so called "law violators" to "law abiders" (Njimba, 2011). As a result of new developments and expansions, the social work profession in Tanzania now plays overarching roles of helping the vulnerable and marginalised groups in solving and/or coping with their problems thus enabling them to meaningfully contribute to individual, community and national development. Yet, its contribution is not adequate; not easily measured; and not widely documented and brought to public awareness. A study conducted by Mabeyo, Ndung'u and Riedl (2014) confirmed that the profession is fairly underestimated, thus placing it at a marginal and invisible position.

Despite its long history, the status and role of social work in Tanzania is still poorly recognised in society, leading to its under-utilisation and even marginalisation of its professionals. Among other reasons, the invisibility of social work is partly attributed to the fact that not much has been documented about it. The author is convinced that the time has come for social workers to work towards increasing the profession's visibility through more action and impact on its community. This chapter is an attempt to contribute to filling this gap. An account of the historic foundations of the profession from the pre-colonial, colonial, post-colonial and post-1980 era will next be discussed.

The pre-colonial welfare systems

Historically, most of the traditional African societies had no trained social work professionals before the advent of modern social welfare and social work practice (Mwansa and Kreitzer, 2012). Instead, they had long-standing traditions of social support systems. Pre-colonial societies had their own ways of explaining and solving problems that arose in their daily lives and in the course of their interaction with others and the environment. Tanzania is not an exception in this practice. Although not well-recorded, most of the Tanzanian ethnic groups had well-established kinship and community ties and structures that acted as safety nets and social security and protection mechanisms for those who

¹ <http://taswo.or.tz/product/first-msw-program-launched-tanzania-tesweps-support-applauded> [accessed 28 June 2014].

could not provide for themselves. Extended families had a responsibility to meet the social, economic and spiritual needs of their family members, whereas surrounding communities acted as providers of social service and voluntary assistance to community members in need (Mchomvu, Tungaraza and Maghimbi, 2002). In many ethnic groups of Tanzania, for instance, there were well-organised arrangements of community contributions of harvests to support the destitute. All these greatly changed when European powers dominated Africa (Mwansa and Kreitzer, 2012). Traditional service structures continue to exist but have been further weakened and overstretched by the ever-rising numbers of people in need, limited resources and widespread poverty.

Colonialism and social welfare programmes in Tanzania

Much has been documented with regard to the impact of colonialism on the development of Africa. In this regard, the introduction of social work in Tanzania is a direct impact of colonialism. The profession traces its origin to the British colonial era. Hence, initial services focused on the protection of the interests of the colonialists and not the colonised *per se*. The social work profession in Tanzania did not begin at the same time and from the same contexts as in developed countries like the United States, England and other European countries, to mention but a few. The profession also did not emanate from the direct efforts and expressed needs of the indigenous Tanzanians. That is the reason why the profession has been referred to by Njimba and Ng'ondi (2006) as an "adopted child".

If a comparative analysis of the history and emergence of the social work profession from the Western and African perspectives is done, two distinct conclusions can be drawn. One clear and realistic assertion is that, from a Western reality, social work emerged as a direct response to pressing societal problems of the time. On the contrary, in the Tanzanian context, social work was not established to respond to the direct pressing needs and social problems of the country *per se*. It was rather imposed by the British colonialists as what I term as a tool to ensure law enforcement and behaviour modification for the violators.

The first social work professional activity in the country was the provision of probation services initiated on 6 October 1950 following the declaration of the 1947 Probation of Offenders Ordinance (UK) which was first applied in the districts of Dar es Salaam and Kisarawe. According to Njimba (2011), in order to effect the implementation of this ordinance, one British officer and one assistant probation officer for Dar es Salaam and Kisarawe were employed. These were the first professional social workers in the country. The expansion of employment of probation officers continued in May 1951 when an assistant probation officer was employed for Tanga (the Eastern region), and in 1955 when another one was engaged for Morogoro. It has been reported that by 1955, there were probation officers in two primary courts of Dar es Salaam and Kisarawe, and five township courts of Tanga, Morogoro, Arusha, Moshi and Mwanza (Njimba, 2011).

Therefore, as opposed to the history of the profession in developed countries where philanthropies and charity works to the poor, homeless and displaced children marked its beginning, in Tanzania the beginnings were different. Based on personal views of Njimba (2011), the history of social work in Tanzania cannot be detached from the concept of welfarism. Social work was primarily established in order to pacify the Tanzanian colony

through creation of behaviour changes among those who were violators of the law (Njimba, 2011). Njimba further asserts: “No social welfare programs were instituted for the rural areas as it was felt that the framework of tribal law and custom would meet the needs of individuals and families.”

The post-independence era

Tanzania mainland, which was a German colony called Tanganyika in 1884 and a British-mandated territory in 1918, achieved independence in 1961. According to Njimba (2011), the country's scope of social work practice began to expand and capture the area of children from the beginning of the 1960s. In 1964, two major professional milestones were marked. One was the Amendment of Affiliation Ordinance (1949) which did not include maintenance of children born out of wedlock of the African indigenous people. The second was the establishment of the National Council of Social Services which acted as a coordinating body of all government and voluntary agencies engaged in social welfare services delivery in the country. Such a council is no longer operational today. However, realising the importance of such a body, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is working towards supporting the Department of Social Welfare and the Tanzania Association of Social Workers so that they can spearhead the process towards the establishment of a Social Work Council and Bill.

Njimba (2011) further states that remarkable progress in the expansion of social work professional practice was also recorded in 1968 when the Children's Homes Regulation Act was enacted. Then, in 1969 a Resettlement for Habitual Criminal Offenders Act No 8 was enacted. This enactment was followed by the subsequent establishment of resettlement centres, namely: Kitengule in Bukoba, Songwe in Mbeya and Wami in Morogoro.

The information above provides an overview of how social work practice began and kept growing. To date, an independent department exists to coordinate social welfare services in the country, namely the Department of Social Welfare. Social welfare offices have been established in all regions although they have not reached all the districts in the country. Statistics show that the social welfare sector is highly understaffed. According to statistics from the Social Welfare Commission (2006, cited in URT, 2008, 9), the shortage of social welfare officers is 21% and 93% at regional and district levels, respectively. Social workers are employed in government and non-governmental, civil society, community-based, faith-based and individual organisations. However, according to findings of a study by Mabeyo, Ndung'u and Riedl (2014), the government is the main employer of social workers. In spite of the above fact and the expansion of social welfare services to regional levels, critical shortfalls exist. Most of the social services are provided through the central government system. This deprives many people from the rural communities of access to such services. Another weakness is that the approaches of access to and methods used in service provision do not adequately and effectively address poverty, which is the source of many problems that are presented by social work clients.

Developments in the post-1980s

In the post-1980s, Tanzania has been undergoing remarkable changes geared towards the expansion, strengthening and regulation of social work practice and education. This section summarises what the author views as the major developments in the profession.

Social work practice in Tanzania has not been guided by any comprehensive policy. Instead, there have only been specific policies addressing specific issues, exhibiting the lack of a common direction for social welfare. Realising the importance of having a comprehensive social welfare policy, the Department of Social Welfare of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare is in the final stages of developing a Social Welfare Policy. The country is also in the process of developing a social protection framework. When finalised, the two policies shall set a guiding implementation framework for social work practice in the country.

Another development worth noting is the revitalisation of a social workers' professional association. With financial support from USAID through the American International Health Alliance (AIHA), the Tanzania Association of Social Workers (TASWO), which was established and registered in May 1982 but stayed dormant for some years, was revived in 2010. The association was revitalised due to its potential in uniting practitioners and strengthening social work practice. TASWO is expected to become a strong and vibrant professional body capable of uniting social workers and regulating their professional conduct within the country. It is also envisaged that the association will stimulate, foster and promote the growth of the profession within the country. Furthermore, it is the objective of this association to bring together social workers of different professional sub-cultures and link them with the global social work community. In order to enhance its capacity, TASWO has formed a collaborative partnership with an association based in Washington, DC – the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). It is expected that through this collaboration, TASWO will learn best practices and adapt them in transforming itself into a powerful professional body with the capacity to make a difference in social work practice in the country.

Another remarkable development is the initiation of the process to formulate a Social Work Council and Bill in 2012. It has been realised by TASWO, the Tanzanian government and other key social work stakeholders, including international organisations like USAID, that the lack of a professional regulatory body to guide social work practice and conduct is a gap that requires immediate remedy. In that regard, TASWO, in collaboration with the Department of Social Welfare, has led the formulation process of the concept note which has been transformed into a draft cabinet paper that spells out the need for establishing such a Council and Bill. The Social Work Council is envisioned to ensure enforcement of social work professional ethical standards and rules to regulate and guide professional practice. To support this, in his opening speech at TASWO's annual general meeting on 16 October 2012, the Minister for Health and Social Welfare, Dr Hussein Mwinyi, indicated that the ministry is committed and willing to table the concept note before higher decision-making authorities (Mkama, 2012).

In order to ensure that the rural families and children affected and infected with HIV and AIDS receive the required psycho-social support, a para-social work (PSW) training programme aimed at creating a cadre of community-based para-professionals has been initiated. As already indicated above, primary partners in this project are the Institute of Social Work and Jane Addams College of Social Work at the University of Illinois at Chicago and its Midwest AIDS Training and Education Center (JACSW/MATEC). The development of this cadre has set an exemplary practice in the country and the East African region in using community-based volunteers to meet the needs of client populations in the region where the social welfare system is proven to be overstretched, underdeveloped, understaffed and inadequately financed. The model has been rolled out and contextualised in Nigeria and Ethiopia. Another remarkable development is the establishment of a programme to coordinate, regulate and standardise the curriculum of the existing and emerging schools of social work (TESWEP) in the country. A regional partnership project for the Promotion of Professional Social Work in Poverty Reduction and Realisation of the Millennium Development Goals (PROSOWO) has also made a significant contribution to the profession (see www.appear.at/prosowo) through research, capacity-building, curriculum development and publications. This is partly bridging the knowledge gap on the role that the profession plays or should play in addressing various problems in Tanzania. These developments have begun to influence the profile and status of the social work profession. The long-term benefits of these developments are meaningful changes in people's standards of life.

The guiding principle and approach to social work practice in Tanzania

Within Africa, there has been a growing debate on the adoption of what are referred to as context-relevant, developmental and indigenous approaches of social work in order to appropriately respond to social problems affecting the masses of the continent. Midgley and Conley (2010) point out that in recent years, there have been explicit efforts to apply principles of social development in social work practice. In terms of practice, Hochfeld *et al.* (2009) view African social work practice and education as *Western* and *colonial*. These authors further comment that the profession is also inappropriately applied. In that regard, the traditional residual approach which is directed at only specific groups of the population is highly criticised in favour of developmental social work. Indigenisation of the profession is equally high on the agenda and social work debate in the region.

Generally, indigenous social work attempts to move away from the use of inappropriate Western social work models in teaching and practice (Hochfeld, *et al.*, 2009). In the African context, indigenous social work is associated with social development (Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo, 2008 and Gray and Fook, 2004, cited by Hochfeld *et al.*, 2009). Despite the ongoing debate on the paradigm shift in social work practice which encourages the adoption of holistic approaches to problem-solving, the situation in Tanzania can be explained as a bit undefined. Although the developmental approach seems to be advocated, the practice has remained rather largely remedial.

With regard to service delivery, it is worth noting that Tanzania is a non-welfare state. Hence, its government does not take the primary responsibility of provision of the average or minimum social protection of its citizens. Rather, it places that first responsibility of care of every individual on the families, and government will only assume responsibility when families have failed to do so. A fundamental question here is: How can families adequately care for their members in conditions of pervasive and extreme poverty levels?

As mentioned above, despite the fact that the government vests the primary responsibility of care to families, it collaborates with various stakeholders in bridging the gap of service provision to those in need. Thus, various stakeholders have been very supportive in providing various forms of services and support ranging from the non-material (such as capacity-building) to material (such as food aid, clothing and educational equipment) to different categories of client groups.

Although different actors and stakeholders are supporting the government in service provision, social welfare services are unevenly distributed. They are largely established in urban areas, with little consideration for the majority of people in need who are based in rural areas. Those eligible for social welfare services in rural areas are unable to receive them because of factors such as unavailability of social welfare officers, lack of information and communication, poor infrastructure and lack of income to afford the cost of travelling to service areas.

Due to difficulties in reaching the majority of the poor population, there is a need to adopt more holistic and comprehensive approaches to ensure adequate social protection of all the vulnerable and marginalised population groups. Therefore, the already established strategies and policy statements for ensuring social protection through improved quality of life and social well-being for the poorest and most vulnerable groups need to be implemented if the country wants to eradicate poverty and increase economic growth for its people. The Tanzanian government has to ensure that both social welfare policy and a social protection framework are in place and operational in order to meet the needs of vulnerable groups.

An integrated community-based welfare strategy involving wide community participation, faith-based organisations, civil society and the private sector is needed if social work is to contribute towards realising poverty reduction goals. Armchair practice with individual clients alone will not offer a quick and appropriate fix to poverty-related problems and challenges. A combination of different approaches and adoption of a more developmental approach will be best strategies to the desired end of improvement of the quality of lives for all Tanzanians. Therefore, a paradigm shift is an inevitable demand of the time and changed context.

Challenges facing the profession

The foregoing discussion shows that although established in the 1950s, social work in Tanzania is not a correspondingly advanced, visible and well-regulated profession. However, it continues to contribute towards solving problems of the vulnerable, marginalised and disadvantaged groups. The trend shows that there has been a growing concern in the country to standardise social work education and practice. Therefore, in

order to enable the profession to make a sound contribution to the lives of the people and raise its visibility, challenges facing it have to be uncovered and addressed.

One of the challenges facing the profession is the lack of adequate and highly qualified professionals. The country lacks a sufficient number of schools offering post-graduate training in the field of social work thus leading to a limited number of professionals with such a qualification. Up until 2012, it was only the Open University of Tanzania that offered a master's degree in social work. Lack of qualified social work professionals has led to what one may say is 'unprofessional teaching' in the social work field. This contributes to marginalisation of the profession and calls for a corresponding need to train more social workers at master's and even doctoral levels. This would contribute towards enhanced capacities of social work training institutions in the country.

Another challenge is the lack of indigenous African literature on social work (Mabeyo, Ndung'u and Riedl, 2014). This contributes to over-reliance on Western models, concepts and approaches. Hence, the situation calls for the need for more social work research and development of indigenous approaches that can inform education and practice.

Inadequate numbers of social workers is another challenge. It became evident from studies by Mabeyo, Ndung'u and Riedl (2014) and Linsk *et al.* (2010) that the number of trained social workers in Tanzania is inadequate to address the overwhelming problems affecting the majority of Tanzanians. It was also found out in the study by Mabeyo, Ndung'u and Riedl (2014) that in some cases non-social workers such as sociologists and nutritionists are employed to assume the roles of social workers. It is the author's view that the intrusion of other professionals into the social work field undermines professional integrity. Therefore, the need for a social work professional regulatory body is urgent.

The Department of Social Welfare which is mandated to oversee the provision of social welfare services is under-financed and hence can hardly employ as many staff as are required and perform to the expected and desired level. This situation leaves a lot of needy people, particularly those in rural areas, without the help and support of social workers. Therefore, decentralisation and expansion of social work services up to the local level is of vital priority. An increased budgetary allocation for social welfare services is also of paramount importance.

The social welfare system is further challenged due to a lack of in-service training programmes for social workers. This deficiency makes the majority of them ill-equipped to run effective services in changed contexts and with complex and new forms of social problems requiring their attention. This calls for the strengthening of the Department of Social Welfare as well as social work training institutions so that they can offer demand-driven and tailor-made training courses on a regular basis. The need to ensure that curricula address pertinent issues such as those of gender and poverty eradication also evidently came out in the study by Mabeyo, Ndung'u and Riedl (2014).

Another serious snag affecting the profession is a weak policy framework to guide training and practice. Despite ongoing efforts to harmonise training, the lack of a comprehensive social welfare policy and legislation is likely to continue to hamper effective enforcement and compliance to set practice guidelines and professional ethics and standards.

When combined, the highlighted challenges culminate into low performance and a marginal impact of the social work profession despite the significant role that it plays in Tanzania's development. Therefore, a transformation of the profession is urgently required.

Conclusion

The social work profession has existed for more than half a century in Tanzania. By its nature, the profession has fundamental roles to play in influencing and enhancing social and economic development. Yet, it is not well recognised and adequately aligned with Tanzania's development plans and programmes. Various factors hinder social work from being adequately utilised and appropriately applied. Over-reliance on traditional methods and lack of indigenous models, theories and approaches partly limit the social work profession from appropriately addressing a myriad of contemporary complex poverty-related problems. Best professional practices are also not adequately documented and communicated. Hence, the place and role of the profession in the realm of social and economic development remain fairly under-represented.

Therefore, increased support and transformation are required to ensure increased visibility and provision of high quality and context-relevant social welfare services in Tanzania. More research is required in order to inform and ensure evidence-based practice. However, the envisioned transformation requires joint efforts of social workers and other stakeholders. Thus, efforts of the United States government to strengthen the profession in the country ought to be applauded and fully embraced by social work stakeholders in Tanzania. Regional and international collaborative efforts to strengthen social work practice and training through projects like PROSOWO are equally important. Tanzanian social workers are therefore used to make optimal use of the available opportunities to strengthen the profession.

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Social Work Education and Practice in Uganda: A Historical Perspective

Janestic M. Twikirize

Introduction

Social work as a profession was introduced in Uganda in the 1950s by the British colonial administration (Ministry of Planning and Community Development, 1965). The education and practice essentially served the needs of the colonial government, and the education curriculum and practice roles focusing mainly on individual welfare and correctional services such as the management of juvenile delinquents and addressing the needs of the orphans and the homeless (Ministry of Planning and Community Development, 1965) were reflective of the nature of social work in the colonising country. The first degree programme started in 1969 at Makerere University (Makerere University Department of Social Work and Social Administration, 2011). Since that time, a number of socioeconomic and political changes have taken place in Uganda including, though not limited to, the liberalisation of the economy, political conflict, emergence of new diseases and epidemics, particularly HIV/AIDS (cf. Government of Uganda, 2010); with great implications for social work education and practice in the country. It has to be stated that there hardly exists any systematic documentation of the development of social work in Uganda. In this regard, this chapter draws on information scattered in mostly historical government publications and the general documentation on social work education and practice in Africa, to trace the history of social work in the country. The chapter also interrogates the extent to which the profession has evolved in order to be relevant in Uganda's current socioeconomic and political situation. The perpetual challenges of social work education and practice as well as suggestions on what needs to be done to enhance its role in poverty reduction and social development are discussed.

The evolution of social work in Uganda

The history of social work in Uganda cannot be delineated from the general development of the profession on the African continent, with its roots in colonialism. Prior to the formal introduction of the profession, social work functions in Uganda were carried out by family and kinship systems. Individual needs and problems were addressed through the extended family and kinship system that was very strong in the pre-colonial era (Kabadaki,

1995; Ministry of Planning and Community Development, 1965). The traditional chiefs and rulers had the responsibility to organise people and small communities to carry out services of a public nature regardless of kinship or tribe (Ministry of Planning and Community Development, 1965). These systems, in a way, constituted a form of social security. Problems such as family conflicts, orphanhood and child protection were handled within the extended family as well as the community. Children were considered not just to belong to the individual families but a community's responsibility. Clan and communal sanctions helped to deal with problems that emerged in society. If a couple had marital conflicts, they did not have to go to formal institutions but instead would report to family and clan elders to help resolve the conflicts. The introduction of social welfare and social policy was necessitated by an increase in the magnitude of social problems particularly after the Second World War as well as increasing urbanisation:

The changing pattern of society with the rural areas ceasing to be isolated and the consequential rapid expansion of urban areas of which the most basic elements were the institutionalization of society and individualization of man, all these combined problems necessitated a planned social policy involving professional specialists, administrators as well as the people. (Ministry of Planning and Community Development, 1965, 4)

European Christian missionaries and subsequently the colonial administrators introduced services such as education, health and social welfare. The establishment of probation services, children's homes and adoption services marked the beginning of formal social services. With this also came the concept of individual welfare. It is revealed in the government's sessional paper No.2 (1957/58) that the basic professional training to provide social welfare services and address the diverse needs of the urban and rural residents was in social work:

The professional staff of the Ministry, namely the probation welfare and community development staff, undergo both short term and long term residential courses in the theory, methods, skills and techniques of social work, with field work practice, either at Nsamizi or regionally. (Ministry of Planning and Community Development, 1965, 18)

After independence, Uganda continued rendering formal social services and institutionalised departments and agencies remained responsible for welfare. These services required trained professionals to deliver them. Some of the original social welfare agencies where social workers were employed included the Ministry of Culture and Community Development; army, police and prisons' welfare sections; the refugee section of the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Internal Affairs; the social welfare section of the Ministry of Health (including medical social work and psychiatric social work); and the social service section of the Ministry of Labour (Yiman, 1976). Major programmes implemented by these agencies included, among others, community development; probation and social welfare; youth work and institutional work in approved schools, remand homes and hostels; social welfare work with staff members and women's organisations; medical social work and psychiatric social work at Mulago and Butabika hospitals; and youth employment services.

Like in many African countries, social work practice in Uganda largely adopted a remedial approach in its inception. Social workers were mainly trained and subsequently employed in remedial service delivery (Ministry of Social Development, 1959). Such services were mostly urban-based and aimed at dealing with social problems of children living on the street, delinquents and rehabilitation of drug addicts in order to minimise disruptions to the smooth running of the colonial government's programmes. In referring to social welfare needs of the urban residents, sessional paper No.4, (1958/59) states: "The social welfare needs of urban areas appear to be of two kinds: group social work and remedial welfare." (Ministry of Social Development, 1959, 2)

There was some limited engagement of social workers in development-oriented programmes. The social work role of community mobilisation and organisation is implied in the history of the profession in Uganda (Ssenkoloto, n.d). Through the community development department, social workers were engaged in the mobilisation of community members to participate in activities to enhance the general standard of living of the individuals, households and the community, particularly in the rural areas. It appears from the scanty literature that while the residual services prevailed in the urban areas, including work with juvenile offenders, community development had particular emphasis in the rural areas. In this regard, Ssenkoloto (n.d., 1) notes: "At the time, the goal of community development was to improve the general standards of living of the masses especially those in the rural areas who formed the backbone of the nation."

Social workers were also highly involved in organising voluntary services across the country. They played a role through the work of voluntary organisations that dealt with child care, the physically and mentally disturbed, youth study groups, education and culture, women's organisations, and services for the aged (Ministry of Planning and Community Development, 1965; Ministry of Social Development, 1959; Yiman, 1976). The colonial administration provided an oversight role to the functioning and operations of such organisations. The objective was to "stimulate the interest and participation of the people in programmes to enhance their own wellbeing" (Ssenkoloto, n.d., 1).

Although the informal social welfare system organised around the families, clans and voluntary organisations has continued to provide services alongside the limited formal social welfare system, it has unfortunately been overstretched and weakened by emerging challenges of urbanisation, widespread social problems, the monetised economy, HIV/AIDS and its attendant problems (such as increase in the number of orphans and vulnerable children) as well as a global culture of individualism.

The widespread poverty cannot be addressed through individual efforts alone but requires macro and multi-pronged policies, plans and programmes. The increasing population demands systematic mobilisation and coordination of activities even at village and community levels. The neoliberal economic policies imply that fewer people even within the same family and clan are willing and available to offer free services such as counselling, guidance and child care. The HIV/AIDS epidemic, widespread and long-term armed conflict, and urbanisation have led to emerging problems hitherto not experienced

on such a large magnitude. All these have called for a renewed need for professional social workers in the country.

The original concentration of the social work profession to remedial services has also been overtaken by changes within the wider socioeconomic environment and by the realisation that most of the problems experienced by individuals have their roots in the socioeconomic and political environment within which they live. Hence, there have been efforts to make social work broader and proactive in its approach. The need for a social development perspective has been underscored (cf. Kabadaki, 1995; Midgley, 1995; Hochfeld *et al.*, 2009).

The ministry under which the social work portfolio lies, has changed names over the years from the Ministry of Social Development in the 1950s to Ministry of Planning and Community Development in the 1960s (as evidenced by the citations in the earlier sections of this chapter), to Ministry of Culture and Community Development, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare during the 1980s and early 1990s and back to the current Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. The change in name from “social welfare” to “social development” was presumed to communicate a change in focus from remedial social welfare services to the more developmental interventions. The ministry is mandated with the social development and social protection issues in the country. Within the portfolio of this ministry, professional social workers are supposed to be employed at every district and sub-county level as probation and welfare officers and community development officers, respectively, both of which are established positions within the local governments. Because of the eclectic nature of social work, they have also been absorbed in almost all ministries, departments and agencies within the public service, for example, in health as medical social workers and counsellors. Evidence from a recent study (Twikirize *et al.*, 2013) suggests that social workers are mostly employed in the NGO sector/civil society organisations where they work as social workers, counsellors, programme officers, monitoring and evaluation specialists, among others. This is based on the fact that the NGO sector is the most predominant sector engaged in community development in the country. When it comes to issues of social protection and addressing problems of vulnerable groups such as orphans and other vulnerable children, persons with disabilities and women, civil society organisations are more pronounced than government departments and agencies; to the extent that it is not uncommon for development funding to be channelled through civil society organisations as the key implementers of community development programmes. On the basis of this, it is befitting that they provide most employment to social workers. Social work is not entrenched yet in the purely private-for-profit sector in Uganda.

Another field of practice for social workers in Uganda has been the HIV/AIDS sector. Since the early 1980s, when the first case was identified and when AIDS quickly turned into a nationwide epidemic, social workers have played significant roles ranging from casework to group work, especially in as far as strengthening social networks of people infected or affected by HIV/AIDS is concerned; and community mobilisation and education. Ankrah (1992) asserts that social workers took a proactive role in dealing with the HIV/AIDS problem. Social workers were involved in supportive counselling to infected individuals but also became instrumental in addressing the needs of AIDS orphans and widows

through group work. At the community level, they were also involved in provision of health education and information about the epidemic. Makerere's Department of Social Work and Social Administration took a pioneering role in researching about the social aspects of the epidemic and has continued to play an active role in AIDS research and policy development within the country.

Other key areas where social workers have been involved are relief and rehabilitation of individuals, groups and communities during and after the war in Northern Uganda. Although not hitherto documented, social workers comprised a significant proportion of the workforce who got involved in the provision of material and non-material relief services to people in internally displaced people's (IDP) camps. This was through the work of local and international NGOs and government agencies in the region. As demonstrated in the recent research on the role of social work in poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (Twikirize *et al.*, 2013), the northern region currently employs the highest number of professional social workers, most of whom are involved in rehabilitation and community development services offered mainly through the NGO sector.

In terms of locality, most social work graduates have traditionally sought employment in urban areas but because of the saturation of social work positions, many have taken up positions unrelated to their professional training. Quite a number of them take up positions in banks and other financial institutions and any other agency that can offer them employment and better working conditions. As noted by Kabadaki (1995), poor living conditions in rural areas and a lack of relative recognition and good remuneration for social work discourage most graduates from working with rural communities where they are most urgently needed. At the same time, both government and NGOs persist in hiring non-social work professionals to perform social work roles partly due to a limited understanding of the skills and competences of different social science disciplines, on the one hand, and the limited visibility of social work as a profession, on the other (Twikirize *et al.*, 2013). Where a social work position is advertised, the key qualifications requirements will list a litany of other qualifications such as education, development studies and sociology as alternatives to social work, thus blurring the unique role of social work and consequently compromising the outcome of the interventions.

The development of social work education in Uganda

The services provided through both the colonial government apparatus and the voluntary organisations necessitated formally trained personnel to provide professional services. Initially, those who wished to study social work had to go to Britain and other European or American countries to acquire such training. These graduates would then be employed by the colonial government. Social work training in Uganda began with the establishment of Nsamizi Training Institute for Social Development in 1952, at that time referred to as the Local Government and Community Development Centre (Yiman, 1974). Its mandate was to train and prepare clerical officers in the social sector for the colonial government. The institute offered diploma and certificate courses in social work and in 1970, a diploma course in social development was introduced in. According to the 1973 curriculum of the

institution, the purpose of the programme was “to bridge the gap created by the former diploma course in social work at Makerere University which was phased out when the department of social work and administration started a new programme leading to a B.A. degree” (Yiman, 1974, 88).

Makerere University, which was founded in 1922 (Makerere University Department of Social Work and Social Administration, 2011) and is the oldest higher education institution in the East African region, opened the Department of Social Work and Social Administration in 1963 to provide pre-service (training before assuming employment) and in-service (for those already employed) training in social welfare, community development and social administration. In 1969, the department started the degree programme in Social Work and Social Administration. The purpose of the training programme for the B.A. (SWSA) was stated “to produce social workers who have had a generic training in social work methods with slight specialization in individual, group or community development” (Yiman, 1974, 92).

This generic focus has remained the underlying approach to social work training in Uganda to date. Another observable adjustment from the initial programme is that at the inception of the degree programme, actual enrolment into the professional course took place in the second year of study and not at entry into the university. The 1973 Social Work and Social Administration curriculum describes the programme as follows:

... a three year course arranged in such a way that at the end of the first year, a student could opt out or be advised to opt out of the professional degree to take a straight single subject degree in sociology or a double subject degree in sociology and social administration; based on his performance in his field work placement at the end of the year. (Yiman, 1974, 93)

The current practice is to enrol students based on their academic performance and choice of programme at the high school level, with the best performing students, obtaining at least two principal passes in economics, history, geography, divinity and other relevant subjects, and who indicate social work as their first choice given priority (Makerere University Department of Social Work and Social Administration, 2011). Given the fact that students sometimes lack adequate career guidance and that effective social work practice is dependent upon not only academic excellence at high school but also the readiness and a developed interest in the profession, the one-year probationary period might have served as a better route to producing well prepared social work graduates.

Until the late 1980s, Makerere was the only university in the country. With the liberalisation of the economy, there has been enormous increase in the number of universities. Currently, there are 31 universities out of which five are public and 26 are private (Uganda National Council for Higher Education, n.d). By the year 2010, 21 institutions were offering a bachelor's degree in social work and social administration. Only two of these universities (both of them private) are currently offering social work training at graduate level, namely Kampala International University and Bishop Barham University College, an affiliate college of Uganda Christian University. There are a few other institutions, mostly private, offering diploma programmes in social work. Probably,

in line with the historical programme offered at Makerere University, almost all the subsequent programmes in the emerging universities have continued to adopt the same label for the social work programme, namely Social Work and Social Administration instead of the common degree label of Bachelor of Social Work used in many other contexts. Both strands embedded in this programme have their roots in Great Britain. The former (social casework) is linked to the work of the Charity Organisation Society in Britain which promoted the need for professional service delivery, while the latter is often linked to the 19th century English poor laws that required systematic administration of services to the poor (Lymbery, 2005). Social work education in Uganda has continued to adopt this two-fold approach to social work training. According to Makerere's current curriculum, the rationale is to prepare social work professionals with competencies for the macro and the micro levels, as well as both "direct social service delivery" and "industrial based service administration" (Makerere University Department of Social Work and Social Administration, 2011). Hence, it is believed that by the end of the training, the social work graduate should be able to engage in direct service delivery with individuals, groups or communities or be employed in the administration and management of service agencies (at the macro level).

Although social work education in Uganda is undoubtedly rooted in the British colonial legacy, there has been a systematic effort to orient the training to the local context with its unique needs and problems. Specifically, there has been a consistent awareness and effort to adopt a developmental and broad-based approach to social work rather than simply the clinical one (Umbach and Yiman, 1975, 92). As early as 1992, authors such as Ankrah (1992, 59) described the social work curriculum as "an already developmental and broad-based approach rather than a clinical orientation in social work education [that] prepares the professional for a practice stance in the great variety of agencies and fields".

Historically, social workers in Uganda have been primarily prepared for generalist practice. Social work, social administration and management, social policy and social planning, and community development have been core courses on the curriculum. Efforts towards contextualisation of the social work curriculum are also reflected in the institutions' mission statements. The mission of the Department of Social Work and Social Administration at Makerere University reads: "To produce social work practitioners who are development-oriented and thoroughly grounded in skills and theories of social work practice, relevant to local and international standards" (Makerere University Department of Social Work and Social Administration, 2011). This is reflective of the efforts to adopt a social development approach in social work training. This appreciation of the need to move away from the more restrictive Western models of social work notwithstanding, little has been done to develop a theory base and generate models relevant to the local context in order to support the indigenisation of social work education.

The most predominant method of instruction for social work in Uganda is the traditional lectures (Makerere University Department of Social Work and Social Administration, 2011). This, coupled with the ever-increasing number of students, implies compromised standards with regards to skills acquisition through mentorship and individual attention

to students afforded in other methods such as small group tutorials. The weakness and challenges of the traditional lecture as the primary method of training social workers were highlighted by social work educators in Africa as far back as 1974 (Umbach and Yiman, 1975) where it is noted that it is a one-way communication between the teacher and the student and as such it undermines the social worker's ability to promote democracy and popular participation later on as a practitioner. Unfortunately, little has been done to deal with this challenge in social work education in Uganda. In a recent study on developmental social work education in Southern and East Africa, Hochfeld *et al.* (2009) conclude that whereas a social development focus is seemingly dominant in the curricula of social work institutions, the approach is not clearly manifested in the training methodologies employed since most institutions adopt the mass degree programme, with huge classes and limited interactive learning.

More progress made in social work training is the fact that almost all social work educators are local as opposed to the original situation where expatriates and foreign trained social workers offered the training. The seeming advantage is that those involved in preparing the social work professionals are conversant with the local context with its attendant problems and needs. The controversy, however, remains that in many cases the elites who have acquired the Western type of education are somewhat detached from the local communities and may as well not be equipped with an adequate appreciation of the local situations in which the masses live. There has also been a perpetual challenge with regard to the use of Western literature in the training of social workers to the extent that even tracing the history of social work from the local context is difficult due to lack of proper documentation and local materials. This challenge was identified as affecting social work education in Africa as early as 1976, during the 3rd Association for Social Work Education in Africa (ASWEA) conference in Addis Ababa:

Training institutions in Africa still rely heavily on imported materials. For our training to be effective, it is desirable that we should have indigenous teaching materials and training courses should take into account both the culture and way of life of the African people. (Yiman, 1976, 14)

At country level, little progress has been made towards reversing this situation. Social work literature produced in Uganda remains severely scarce. In the end, the students become more conversant with the social work theories and models developed in the West, while struggling to apply them in their local situations. Educators in the region have an outstanding challenge to conduct research and produce local materials appropriate for social work education in their contexts. This could also be of benefit to the international community through shared knowledge.

Another important aspect of social work education right from its inception in Uganda is fieldwork (Ministry of Social Development, 1959; Ministry of Planning and Community Development, 1965; Yiman, 1974, 88). The rationale for fieldwork is to assist students to develop practice skills by applying the knowledge acquired in class. It also provides students with opportunities to develop skills in the use of social work methods. How much a student learns or achieves during fieldwork is dependent upon the interest and

commitment of the agency, the interest of the community members among which he or she is working, the resources available (structure, human resources and facilities at the agency) and the pace at which programmes move, all of which may be outside the direct control of the student or the academic institution.

As early as 1972, social work educators underscored the importance of careful selection of agencies and/or community projects for placement of students, based on their potential and direct interest in student training and supervision (Umbach and Yiman, 1975). Whereas efforts are made by institutions in Uganda to guide students in the choice of agencies for fieldwork, there is no guarantee that they will work in agencies where there is an optimal environment for acquisition of social work practice skills. Getting an agency for fieldwork practicum is increasingly becoming as difficult as getting formal employment. This is related to the increasing number of social work students from different institutions, released for fieldwork almost at the same time. To overcome such challenges, institutions can benefit from an association that brings together social work education institutions at the national level where issues of fieldwork and other aspects of the curriculum are regularly discussed and streamlined in order to ensure harmony. Conversely, the social development agencies are limited and also lack both physical and other facilities to accommodate the students including such basic things as office space and desks for the extra person.

Another historical challenge of fieldwork in Uganda has been the lack of accreditation of agencies and agency supervisors. Hence, there is no guarantee that the agencies where students are placed have professional social workers to provide supervision and guidance. Even where they exist, many agency supervisors have not been oriented in student supervision by the academic institution and, therefore, they may not competently provide the required practice mentoring and evaluation. Additionally, the academic supervisors are too thin on the ground and too overwhelmed by the big number of supervisees to provide any meaningful supervision.

In addition, the resources provided for such field visits are inadequate. At Makerere University, for example, only one visit per student is budgeted for. So it remains at that: a spot check by the academic supervisor instead of the ongoing guidance and supervision that it should be.

The other challenge has to do with the assessment and evaluation of fieldwork. Because of the inherent weaknesses in the organisation of placement, it is almost impossible to meaningfully assess the student's performance. Consequently the norm has been to pass or fail the student based on the nominal indicator of whether or not she or he was present in the agency for the prescribed period. Lately, there is increasing pressure from the National Council for Higher Education for the departments of social work to establish systematic procedures of assessing fieldwork as a core course of the curriculum. This will call for increased human and financial resources, active engagement with the agencies and systematic ways of placing students in relevant agencies.

Challenges and prospects for social work in Uganda

From the foregoing discussion, it is apparent that social work is not a new profession in Uganda. Given the increasing poverty levels and a myriad of other social problems,

the increasing relevance and role of social work cannot be overstated. Unfortunately, the profession still faces challenges of recognition and its role in national development, although very real on the ground, remains blurred in the public and political arena. Most of its current challenges emanate from its historical links with residual services and the failure to formally regulate the practice. The following sub-sections highlight some of the critical areas that need to be addressed in order to re-affirm the role of social work in national development.

Legal and regulatory framework for social work

Since its inception, the social work profession and subsequent practice in Uganda has neither been regulated nor protected. Of late, anybody trained in any humanities and social science fields can be employed as a social worker. This lack of protection of the social work profession is neither unique nor new to Uganda. It is rooted in the history of social work and possibly its eclectic nature. In the early 20th century, writers debated the overreliance of social work on the psychological theories, suggesting that:

...the introduction of treatment methods deriving from related disciplines did little to suggest that a social worker possessed unique expertise and was hence worthy of professional status; it appeared that a social worker was doing nothing that could not equally well be accomplished by many other occupations – and even mature people of good sense lacking any qualification at all. (Cormack and McDougall, 1955, cited in Lymbery, 2005, 39)

This appears to be the prevailing situation as evidenced by a recent study (Twikirize *et al.*, 2013) which indicates that 29.5% of the social work practitioners had no social work qualifications at all.

Apart from the lack of a legal provision for the regulation of social work practice, the profession also suffers from internal organisational weaknesses. A professional association, the National Association of Social Workers in Uganda (NASWU) has existed since 1973 but it has largely been invisible and less influential in terms of social work education, practice or social policy agenda in the country. Reviving and strengthening the national association of social workers will be required in order to further position social work as an indispensable profession capable of making a visible contribution in the development of the country. The professional association would also play a role in spearheading efforts to regulate social work practice. There are other regional and international bodies such as the Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa (ASSWA), the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the International Council for Social Development (ICSD) that could provide opportunities for collaboration and networking, but most educators and practitioners have not been active in these bodies. The reasons constraining membership or establishment of relevant professional organisations are yet to be detected given that these are likely to be institution-specific.

The social work profession needs to be regulated in order to protect, strengthen and enhance its role in development as well as increase its credibility and visibility. The ultimate goal should be to establish a regulatory body that provides oversight to the education and practice of social work in Uganda and institute sanctions for the abuse of the professional

code of conduct. Minimum standards would be instituted for registration as a social worker before one can be allowed to practise. This will reduce professional misconduct.

Need to strengthen the linkage between education and practice

Social work educators in collaboration with social welfare agencies have a public role and obligation to produce professionally competent, critically aware, culturally sensitive social work practitioners who are committed to promoting the social well-being of individuals, groups, families, organisations and communities. The major challenge has been to link development practice to training for better outcomes in terms of skills. Ideally, experience, needs and challenges in the social welfare agencies should provide feedback into training and education to make it more relevant and responsive to the social development needs. In view of this, social work educators, in collaboration with practitioners, will need to review, revise and develop social work curricula that strongly reflect the social development philosophy that underlies it. Such curricula should reflect the emergent issues of human rights, ethics, gender, culturally relevant skills and methods and also dynamically respond to the development needs of the country and region for social work to position itself as relevant profession.

The need for in-country advanced social work training programmes

There are limited social work training opportunities at an advanced level (beyond the bachelor's degree). As a result, most originally trained social workers have crossed to other fields of specialisation including public health and business administration. There is an urgent need to increase opportunities for post-graduate training in social work in the country.

The need to strengthen field practice education

Fieldwork remains an indispensable component of the social work curriculum. There is a need to systematically review the way it is currently conducted and bridge the gaps. Because over 80% of Uganda's population lives in a rural environment, most development needs are to be found in these areas. There is, therefore, a need to emphasise and plan for block placements of students in rural areas. This has financial implications for the upkeep of students and supervisors. It also has challenges of meaningful agency supervision due to the lack of capacity in those areas. To resolve this, ways to identify and routinely orient agency supervisors have to be devised. Orientation could be done in regional workshops for potential supervisors annually. To encourage the agency supervisors, the institutions might issue them with certificates so that they have a feeling of being partners in the training of social workers. There is also an urgent need to formalise the means of assessing fieldwork as a core component of the social work curriculum.

Increased research and academic output to promote locally relevant education

Another historical challenge of social work education in Uganda and East Africa has been the severe lack of locally relevant training materials. Increased focus should be put on social work research and publication of materials that are relevant to the local context and

experiences. This will not only help in enhancing provision of locally relevant education, but also increase the visibility of the profession.

Increased networking and linkages both at national, regional and international levels

Membership and active participation in regional and international professional associations is instrumental in capacity-building; information sharing; exchange programmes; and research, among others. It also provides a stronger front for promoting the profession in participating countries. Ugandan social work institutions, educators and practitioners will need to build strong links with such organisations already established at both regional and international levels in order to maximise the benefits of associating and networking in a bid to promote the profession.

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Social Work in Burundi's Post-conflict Society

Helmut Spitzer, Jacqueline Murekasenge and Susan Muchiri

Introduction

Social work in Burundi is a young profession that faces the challenge of dealing with the complex and multi-faceted problems of a post-conflict society. The small, landlocked *République du Burundi*, located in the African Great Lakes region, has suffered from excessive civil war and widespread political violence for decades. Since 2006, the country has reached a state of relative peace and stability, but the population is still deeply affected by the long-term impact of conflict, violence and displacement, coupled with widespread poverty, social tensions, land scarcity and a profound lack of basic infrastructure and services. In this chapter, we provide a brief overview of the historical and political context of Burundi. We depict a picture of the 'broken world' many Burundians live in, and highlight challenges for social work education and practice. We also illustrate some practice examples and outline future perspectives of social work in this beautiful yet shattered country.

Historical and political context

Like other African countries, Burundi has had a rich pre-colonial past based on oral history and with no written accounts about it. Different social groups have been living on the territory of today's Burundi for centuries, including the Hutu, Tutsi and Twa. Today, the pygmoid Twa constitute a minority of 1% of the Burundian population and are said to have formerly dwelled in the great tropical forests that once dominated the region's landscape. The Hutu at about 85% comprise the majority of the population, while the Tutsi constitute a minority of 14% (Wagner, 2008; Lemarchand, 2008). The Hutu, Tutsi and Twa speak the same language (Kirundi); share the same customs and beliefs; and used to live together under a system of administration of both Hutu and Tutsi chiefs. Since the 16th century, the region has been organised as a monarchical system under a king (*mwami*) who had both secular as well as spiritual authority (Berahino, 2011). According to Lemarchand (2008), the real power holders were neither Hutu nor Tutsi, but the descendants of princely families, the *ganwa*.

Burundi was first colonised by Germany (1896 to 1916) and later came under Belgian administration (1916 to 1962). Both colonial powers based their political system of indirect rule on the enforcement of social stratification between the Hutu and Tutsi – a

stratification that was justified by the colonialists with a racial theory that became popular as the *Hamitic Hypothesis*. According to the early Christian missionaries, the Tutsi stood as the finest example of the 'Hamitic' race (based on the Biblical figure of Ham) who were fantasised as being of European origin because of their supreme social status, while the Hutu were regarded as rather primitive agricultural natives (Mamdani, 2001; Lemarchand, 2009). Scientific literature abounds with the terminology of the Hutu and Tutsi groups in Burundi (as well as in Rwanda): Do they constitute ethnic identities; racial groups; political configurations; or social constructs? Whichever explanation is favoured (and this paper is not the place for a deep analysis of this question), it is a historical fact that this terminology, and its concomitant implications, has been and continues to be a crucial factor in the history and politics of Burundi, and indeed in the wider spectrum of the Great Lakes region. As Lemarchand (2006a, 44) put it:

The Hutu-Tutsi conflict is pre-eminently a conflict about power. It is a conflict about whether power should gravitate to the hands of a minority [Tutsi] representing 15 percent of the population or be shared with the representatives of the Hutu majority.

Since independence in 1962, Burundi has suffered from a series of military dictatorships, accompanied by widespread violence and with a trend towards Tutsi hegemony. According to Wolpe (2011), the conflicts in Burundi are best understood as a result of the manipulation of ethnic identities by the political class in the struggle for post-colonial control of the state. Insurrections instigated by Hutu elements in 1972 and 1988 triggered massive retribution from the Tutsi regime. In 1972, up to 300,000 Hutu were killed by a Tutsi-dominated army, and hundreds of thousands fled the country. These genocidal massacres left a deep scar on the collective memory of the Hutu people (Chrétien, 2008; Lemarchand, 2009). International pressure brought forth reforms in the country and paved the way for democratic elections in 1993 which led to the appointment of a Hutu-led cabinet. But in Burundi, that very same year became known as '*la crise*', a term denoting another area of mass killings and political violence (Obura, 2008). After the assassination of the first Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye, the country descended into what Lemarchand (2009, 146) called "a hellish cycle of ethnic violence and counterviolence from which it has yet to fully recover". During the conflict, Burundi was described as the most dangerous country for aid operations in the Great Lakes region (Prendergast, 1996).

Political turmoil haunted the country for the next 12 years. As many as 150,000 people died in the period following that assassination – both in Hutu massacres of unarmed Tutsis and in the Tutsi-led army assaults on Hutu peasants that followed (Wolpe, 2011). Up to 800,000 people sought refuge in the neighbouring countries of Rwanda, Tanzania and Zaire (today's Democratic Republic of the Congo), and tens of thousands were internally displaced (Lemarchand, 2009; Wolpe, 2011).

A turning point in the country's political evolution was reached with the signing of the multiparty Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi (Arusha Accord) in 2000.¹ After several coup attempts and ceasefire agreements between different warring parties, a new transitional government was installed in 2003. Since 2006, after a long-

¹ See <http://www.issafrica.org/AF/profiles/Burundi/arusha.pdf>.

term peace process at national, regional and international levels which, at different stages, involved influential African political figures such as Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Nelson Mandela of South Africa, the country has reached a situation of relative peace and stability (Boshoff, Vrey and Rautenbach, 2010). The new political system is based on the principles of power-sharing, and tries to give equal recognition to the claims of Hutu and Tutsi in the new government under Pierre Nkurunziza who has served as president since 2005 (for a critical discussion of the power-sharing system, see Lemarchand, 2009; Vandeginste, 2009).

On a regional level, Burundi became a member of the East African Community in 2007 – a step which might not only contribute to regional integration but also to the retention of political stability and economic recovery in the country. But as will be seen below, the challenges in this fragile context are still huge, as are the challenges for social work.

Living in a broken world: The impact of long-term conflict and violence

The population of Burundi has experienced a long period of individual and collective suffering and trauma. The term “broken world” has been borrowed from Prunier (2006, 356) who introduced it in order to describe the collective traumatic state of people in the context of post-genocide Rwanda. Several authors have claimed that Burundi, with its tragic past and disastrous loss of human lives, has gained relatively little international attention compared to its neighbour – Rwanda (Obura, 2008; Lemarchand, 2009). As Obura (2008, 20) puts it:

Burundi does not have the attraction of the giant Democratic Republic of the Congo or the image of post-genocide Rwanda. It is small, not well known to the outside world and strategically of no interest to the great powers.

Yet distress and hardship of the Burundi (people of Burundi) are omnipresent and can be best understood as a vicious circle between conflict and poverty.

What needs to be underscored is the circular relationship between conflict and poverty. Just as conflict causes poverty, poverty in turn generates conflict. There can be little doubt that the civil war drove many peasant communities to the edge of famine, through widespread destruction of human, social and economic capacities. (Lemarchand, 2006b, 9)

Burundi is a predominantly rural country with an agriculture-based economy. It has an area of only 27,830 square kilometres but a population of more than ten million people (CIA, 2014), which makes it one of the most densely populated countries on earth. The majority (92%) of the people live off subsistence farming in areas where productive land is under stress (Berahino, 2011). This stress has been exacerbated in the recent past by vast resettlement and reintegration processes of hundreds of thousands of former refugees and internally displaced people, leading to new social tensions and occasional violence along ethnic boundaries. In interviews, respondents depicted a rather dramatic picture of this situation. One NGO representative said: “People slaughter for a piece of land.” And according to a university official in Bujumbura, the current land issue in Burundi, in the

context of mass repatriation, is “a bomb in waiting which will explode one time”.² Despite macro-economic efforts to come to grips with the poverty situation in the country, the micro-economic, grassroots dimensions of rural poverty, particularly in provinces most directly affected by civil conflict, are generally neglected (Lemarchand, 2009) and require much more attention in poverty reduction and social development strategies, including social work interventions.

According to the United Nations Development Programme, Burundi is one of the poorest countries on earth, with a Human Development Index³ of 0.355. It ranks 178 out of 186 countries worldwide (UNDP, 2013). Life expectancy at birth is only 50 years. An alarming indicator is the children’s mortality rate, despite some progress in the past. While the under-5 mortality rate was 183 in 1990, still 139 children out of 1,000 live births died in 2011 (UNICEF, 2013). In general, the health infrastructure has been heavily destroyed, leaving the population destitute. Infectious diseases as well as illnesses associated with malnutrition, malaria and AIDS are widespread throughout the country, but particularly rampant in camps for displaced persons (Hatungimana, 2008). The education sector has equally been destroyed (Obura, 2008), and despite some progress in increasing school enrolment and attendance rates – net enrolment in primary school rose from 59.8% in 2004 to 96.1% in 2010/2011 (UNICEF, 2012) – many children are deprived of their basic right to education.

Referring back to the metaphor of the “broken world”, one must take into account a gender perspective. Without considering the lower social and economic status of women in Burundi’s society in general and the widespread dimension of gender-based violence against women, in particular, one cannot fully understand the challenges of present-day Burundi. The low social status of women leaves them vulnerable to sexual violence, while cultural taboos prevent them from seeking help. Women and girls suffer from the psychological, physical and social implications of both past sexual violence during times of conflict⁴ and widespread domestic and sexual violence as part of their day-to-day life in times of peace. Daley (2008, 125) describes the horrors of war-time rape and other forms of sexual violence in Burundi: “Young women have been, and continue to be, abducted, raped, exposed to sexually transmitted diseases and murdered because of their gender.”

Those who survive rape suffer from physical and psychological damage and social stigma, which leads to rejection by their husbands, families and communities. Some are even forced to marry their rapist. There can be no peace in society when at the same time the integrity of the female population of this very society is structurally and sexually violated. The corresponding challenges are evident: gender inequalities must be addressed at all levels of society; cultural norms which perpetuate power hierarchies alongside gender roles must be critically reflected upon and finally overcome; a culture of impunity which

² Interviews with university and NGO staff in February 2012.

³ The Human Development Index reflects a composite measure combining three dimensions (health, education and living standards) based on four indicators (life expectancy at birth, mean years of schooling, expected years of schooling and gross national income per capita).

⁴ There are also reports of sexual violence against men and boys both during conflict and in displacement, not only in Burundi but in the entire Great Lakes region (Hovil, 2012).

trivialises sexual violence against women and girls must be abandoned; and rape must be brought on the agenda and prosecuted.

According to UNICEF (2012), Burundi's efforts towards poverty reduction through its second Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (Republic of Burundi, 2012) constitute an important step in the transition from conflict and emergency to stability and development. Its current focus on social services, social protection, enhanced governance and the participation of communities in development efforts must be supplemented by efforts towards peace-building, reconciliation and gender equality in order to promote social cohesion and social equality in the country. Social work can play a significant role in these areas. With the transformation towards peace and development in Burundi came the emergence of the profession. This will be dealt with in the next section.

Social work education

Apart from the past ten years, social work training in Burundi has been exclusively offered at upper secondary level at the *Ecole Sociale de Gitega*, the only school of its kind in the country. After six years of primary education and four years of lower secondary education, students enrol for this type of school for a period of four years and graduate with a diploma (Diplôme A2) which grants them access to the state university. This kind of training is not referred to as *travail social* (social work) but qualifies a graduate as *assistante social* (social assistant). The training is restricted to female students only – an artifact which can be seen as a gender-stereotyped view of social care. Traditionally, social assistants work in hospitals, NGOs, HIV/AIDS counselling and other social services.⁵

In 2004, tertiary social work training was introduced in Burundi by Hope Africa University (HAU). HAU, a private university established by the Free Methodist Church, was formerly based in Nairobi and shifted to Bujumbura in 2003. In the first ten years of its inception, HAU qualified more than 600 social workers.⁶ The three years bachelor's programme remains the only social work training at university level.⁷ Interestingly, the studies of social work do not attract many students in the first place; many only opt for it due to a lack of alternatives. This is due to the fact that social work is a very young profession in the country and therefore merely recognised, and many people, including government officials, do not understand its professional profile. There has also been an uneven job market for social workers. When students complete their studies, many have a hard time finding proper employment. While a good number of them enter the NGO sector, particularly humanitarian, refugee and development projects of international organisations, some venture into other careers where more lucrative positions are available. It is also reported that some social workers migrate to Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo where they find better employment opportunities.

Originally, the curriculum had a strong emphasis on counselling, but in 2007 it was decided to shift the focus to community development. The curriculum of the Bachelor's Programme in Social Work and Community Development includes specific courses to

⁵ Interview with the director of *Ecole Sociale de Gitega*, February 2012.

⁶ Interviews with staff from Hope Africa University in February 2012 and March 2013.

⁷ In 2013, there were plans to establish a social work programme at Université du Lac Tanganyika.

provide students with essential skills to handle the broad range of social problems in the country, such as HIV/AIDS; gender-based violence; land and ethnic conflict; resettlement of refugees; and poverty and hunger.

The Department of Social Work and Community Development at HAU faces the same constraints as other African schools of social work: lack of funds; lack of material and institutional infrastructure; shortage of updated and appropriate teaching materials and literature; insufficient qualified lecturers; and a fundamental lack of capacities to conduct research and engage in academic activities.

By 2014, there was no professional association in the country to represent social workers' concerns, but social work educators and students at HAU had started to discuss first steps towards the establishment of such an association. There is a tremendous lack of awareness by government officials with regard to social work, hence, a need to bring the responsible ministries on board and sensitise them about the potential of this profession. The biggest challenge of placing social work's profile onto the social development agenda in the country is the almost complete non-existence of a functioning social welfare system. Social work lacks a legal framework upon which it could legitimately accentuate its contribution to the reconstruction and development of Burundi. However, social workers have already made some efforts towards these processes, despite the fact that they lack political and public recognition. In the subsequent section, we outline some challenges and approaches for social work practice in line with conceptual deliberations and practice examples.

Challenges and approaches in social work practice

Post-conflict situations pose particular challenges for social work and require specific conceptual considerations and practice interventions (Cox and Pawar, 2013; Spitzer and Twikirize, 2014). In Burundi, quite a large number of NGOs, both local and international, operate in different social sectors of the society; some of them are staffed with social workers while others employ health and development workers as well as clergy staff but do have a strong emphasis on social work although they might term it differently.⁸ Some have a particular focus in their approach (for example, psycho-social support for specific target groups) while others apply a broad range of interventions. According to Cox and Pawar (2013, 364), there are three key areas in which social workers should be involved:

- Peace-building at preventive and remedial levels, through, for example, reconciliation projects and programmes to enhance social cohesion;
- Healing the wounds of conflict, wherever the many victims of conflict are to be found and whatever the nature and causes of their suffering might be; and
- Rebuilding the lives of families and communities.

Conceptually, a social development approach in social work seems to be appropriate to respond to the complex problem dynamics as outlined above. This approach has gained broad attention and recognition in African social work (Chitereka, 2009) although its principles and methods have not yet been thoroughly translated to conflict and post-

⁸ These considerations are based on interviews with NGO staff in March 2013.

conflict contexts. Developmental social work has a strong focus on interventions that specifically enhance the standard of living of people affected by poverty and deprivation. This involves the use of investment strategies such as income-generating activities, employment and self-employment opportunities and asset building as well as the adoption of community-based, participatory and rights-based interventions (Midgley, 2010). Concrete and tangible responses to the material well-being of people affected by the combined consequences of conflict, poverty and displacement should be central to this approach. This includes meeting the most basic needs such as food, water, shelter, sanitation, health care and essential infrastructure. In Burundi, social-sector projects must be sensitive to the need to address ethnic and regional imbalances, and focus on rural development, given the predominance of the agricultural sector (Berahino, 2011).

Apart from material interventions, the psycho-social needs of people who might be individually and collectively traumatised and who suffer from loss and grief should also be targeted. This includes culture-specific counselling and sensitive interventions with regard to particularly vulnerable groups such as former child soldiers, victims of sexual violence, survivors of massacres and “disaster victims” – a term referring to the multitude of displaced persons and those who are repatriated or dispersed (Hatungimana, 2008). Ventevogel, Ndayisaba and van de Put (2011) describe the need for specific training programmes for social workers in the country to address traumatic experiences and other psycho-social needs. It was observed that social workers engaged in government-run *Centres de Développement Familiale* were not trained in psycho-social assistance and were mainly occupied with reporting problem families and providing material assistance. The authors further stress the importance of capacity-building and training initiatives at community level. In a project run by HealthNet TPO (Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation), social workers devoted much time to mobilising and training members of volunteer organisations, involving them in psycho-social activities and assisting them in taking over direct psycho-social service delivery. Members of these community-based organisations would refer only the most difficult cases to the more experienced NGO staff.

Social development and psycho-social interventions should ideally be accompanied by efforts towards peace-building and reconciliation at different levels of the society, from the micro level of families and communities to the mezzo level of institutions up to the level of macro policies and strategies. The latter pose a particular challenge since it implies that social work has the potential to influence politics and to facilitate human rights, social justice and political order – a rather utopian notion for Burundi where social work is still in its infancy and where the political climate is under constant tension.⁹

For social work interventions to be appropriate and meaningful, they should consider and respect the cultural values and practices predominant in a given context. This includes the collaboration with existing community networks and structures and the incorporation of locally relevant ethical aspects which are important for the restoration

⁹ In this regard, two civil society organisations deserve attention: the *Observatoire pour l'Action Gouvernementale* (OAG) and the *Ligue Iteka*, both of which established themselves as watchdogs of government action and heavily contributed to the promotion of mutual trust between Hutu and Tutsi (Lemarchand, 2006a).

of social harmony and which are usually linked to cultural, religious and spiritual belief systems (Spitzer and Twikirize, 2014). In Burundi, culture-specific, community-based social work is well advised to align its interventions with the so-called *ubushingantahe*, a traditional institution of male elders of integrity who are responsible for settling conflicts at community level (Naniwe-Kaburahe, 2008; Bujo, 2009). During a post-conflict period, the judicial and administration system is sometimes incapable of rendering justice, providing restitution for stolen property, or effecting reparations for victims. It is thus important to find mechanisms that are complementary to the judicial approach to delivering justice, restoring the rights of victims and defusing social tensions (Naniwe-Kaburahe, 2008). The *ubushingantahe* system represents such a mechanism and is deeply rooted in Burundi's culture. However, cultural values were fundamentally disrupted during the years of ethnic violence and shifted from harmony and respect to asymmetry and power. The challenge is to find a balance between rediscovering positive aspects of cultural institutions and match them with the societal changes due to conflict and modernism (Haken *et al.*, 2011).

While it is important to respect culture in social work practice, it is equally paramount to safeguard human rights. Sometimes these dimensions are mutually inclusive; sometimes there is a big gap between the two of them which social workers have to deal with. This is particularly the case when it comes to gender issues and efforts towards empowering women. Burundi's society is strongly based on the principles of a patriarchal culture. This also applies to the *ubushingantahe* system. Hence, social workers will most probably face challenges and conflicts in their efforts to promote gender equality and to fight further victimisation of women affected by sexual violence through cultural norms and practices. Cochran (2008, 37), referring to the issue of wartime sexual violence and gender equality in situations of transitional justice, made the following remarks:

In order for the life of a female victim of wartime sexual violence to return to normal, she must be provided rehabilitation and acceptance back into her community. The path to rehabilitation, though costly, is relatively clear: the victim needs psychological and medical services, access to prosecution, the ability to earn a livelihood, and participation in community life. The path to community acceptance, however, is more challenging and complex because it involves changing culture.

One example of how to incorporate cultural elements into social work practice and combine them with social development and peace-building initiatives is the *Centre Ubuntu*. This organisation is built upon principles of the African ethical concept of *ubuntu* which refers to the interconnectedness of human beings (Ntakarutimana, 2008; Maphosa, 2009). Basic *ubuntu* values are respect, solidarity, peacefulness, reconciliation, forgiveness and generosity – values which play an important role when it comes to the promotion of solidarity and justice between different ethnic groups and between settlers and repatriates. *Centre Ubuntu* is working towards community-based peace-building efforts, using the principles of *ubuntu* as a cross-cutting approach. The organisation's concept is based on five interlinked pillars:¹⁰ sharing of *ubuntu*-based values at community level; trauma healing; conflict management; promotion of leadership skills; and social and economic

¹⁰ Interview with staff from *Centre Ubuntu* in March 2013.

development. The approach is highly participatory and based on local conflict resolution and problem-solving structures such as the *ubushingantahe*. The aim is to reach a win-win situation in highly complex and tense community contexts by referring to *ubuntu* principles. Social workers cooperate closely with grassroots representatives and try to establish participatory decision-making processes with regard to the implementation of concrete development projects, hence peace-building and development go hand-in-hand (see also Spitzer and Twikirize, 2014).

One aspect has to be mentioned here: Frontline social workers are themselves personally exposed to highly ethnicised and politicised situations. As one NGO-representative said: "You cannot just walk into a village and say: 'Here I am,'" thus referring to the "ethnic" identity of the social worker.¹¹ It makes a difference if someone is perceived as either a Hutu or Tutsi, or if someone has internalised such identity constructs and maybe even experienced personal loss or damage caused by the other group. Consequently, a critical and self-reflective perspective becomes very important for social workers operating under such extreme circumstances.

Future perspectives

Social work is a rather new profession in Burundi and has to face unique challenges in a post-conflict situation that transcends towards peace and development, but that has also the potential for further unrest and violence. In Burundi's *Vision 2025* which is described as "a true roadmap for the economic and social development of Burundi" (Ministry of Planning and Communal Development/UNDP, 2011), three scenarios for the future development of the country are outlined: a trend scenario called *Ntarataze* (Kirundi for trying various ways and see which one works); a pessimistic scenario called *Buriye* (literally meaning late at night); and an optimistic scenario called *Burundi Buhire* (Burundi that prospers) which is advocated as "Happy Burundi".

Interestingly, both international and local writers refer to the symbolic concept of a disease when describing Burundi's situation. In his attempt to portray Burundi's past of ethnic violence, Ndarubagiye (1996, ix) describes the country as "suffering from a very serious disease" and refers to a Burundian proverb: "If someone wants his disease to be cured, he must have the courage to reveal it to the healer." And Lemarchand (2009, 159) notes: "Some people suffer from inherited diseases; Burundi suffers from its inherited history." It is evident that many of Burundi's present-day problems and *social illnesses* are rooted in its violent past and historical legacy of political and ethnic conflict.

Social work in Burundi might be still young, but it has the potential to meaningfully contribute to the overall healing and development process of the country, in concerted action with other stakeholders. In the past two years, the only tertiary social work training institution, Hope Africa University, managed to get in touch and network with regional and international partners. In February 2013, social work in Burundi was for the first time ever presented to colleagues from the East African Community at a regional workshop held in

¹¹ Interview with a *mushingantahe* in Nyanza Lac, March 2013.

Nairobi.¹² In March 2014, a delegation of social work educators, students and practitioners from Burundi actively participated in the international social work conference in Kampala on “Professional Social Work in East Africa” and jointly celebrated World Social Work Day 2014 together with more than 400 colleagues from different parts of the world.¹³ There, Burundian social work educators were able to network with the community of social work educators across the globe and were also linked up with the Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa (ASSWA). Burundian social workers had the chance to liaise with their regional and international colleagues and the African unit of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW-Africa region). In addition, Burundian social work students had an opportunity to realise that they opted for a profession that is powerful and has the capacity to bring about change in their society.

In order to maintain such a spirit and to enhance the existing capacities of social work education and practice in Burundi, support from the international social work fraternity is needed. Such support must not resemble what Midgley (1981) called “professional imperialism”, a term that refers to an uncritical imposition of imported social work concepts and methods that ignore the unique historical, cultural and societal circumstances of the recipient country of such imported products. This is not what Burundi needs. International social work partnerships should rather be based on a concept of mutual dialogue and learning. In Burundi, there is ground for new research and practice initiatives in order to highlight social work’s contribution to the future development of the country. Ndikumana (2012) describes Burundi as a rare African case of successful transition from civil war. This optimistic view corresponds with a common greeting in Burundi’s everyday life: *Amahoro*, a Kirundi term for peace. It is a term expressing mutual respect and hope for the maintenance of social harmony in the community (Spitzer and Twikirize, 2014). The resilience of the Burundi is tremendous, despite the precarious conditions they live in. Social work, with international support, can have its share in strengthening this resilience.

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¹³ The conference “Professional Social Work in East Africa: Towards Social Development and Poverty Reduction”, held from 16th to 18th March, 2014, was part of the PROSOWO project.

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Social Work Education in Ethiopia: Celebrating the Rebirth of the Profession

Wassie Kebede

The pre-2004 history of social work education in Ethiopia

The pre-2004 social work education in Ethiopia has more or less a similar history to that of the beginning of tertiary level education in the country. The first university in Ethiopia was opened in 1951 as University College of Addis Ababa which was later renamed Haile Selassie I University. The first school of social work was established in 1959. A brief interview by a social work student in 2006 (as part of writing an article for the graduation bulletin) with the pioneer social work professor – the late Seyoum Gebreselassie – revealed that “social work training started in Ethiopia by a Swedish social worker called Anna Mathol in 1959. The social work training programme was relocated to the then Haile Selassie I University established in 1962.” (Addis Ababa University, School of Social Work, 2006) The social work training started with a two-year training of diploma holders. The training was then upgraded to a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) in 1967. In the 1960s, the School of Social Work at Haile Selassie I University was considered centre of excellence in Ethiopia and in Africa at large (ibid.).

However, in 1974, when the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie I ended and the socialist regime under Mengistu Haile Mariam came into power, the school of social work was closed and all references and methodological approaches related to social work were discouraged. Social work was considered a bourgeois profession which could deny the active participation of the proletariat to defend its revolution. The socialist government assumed that the government alone was responsible for addressing all human needs, including social welfare services (Stout, 2009).

Social work education in Ethiopia had to go through a 30 year hibernation period (1974-2004) during which the two pioneers of the profession (Professors Seyoum Gebreselassie and Andargachew Tesfaye) hid six macro social work courses by incorporating them into the curriculum of sociology at Haile Selassie I University. To some extent, this helped social work training to survive although under a different rubric. By incorporating some social work courses into sociology, the curriculum was revised and the department was renamed Applied Sociology, and subsequently renamed Sociology and Social Administration, Sociology and Social Anthropology, and now back to its original name, the Department

of Sociology, out of which anthropology has divorced itself and become an independent department, named Social Anthropology. Some social work-related courses, in connection to social welfare, family and social psychology continued to be offered by the Department of Sociology, which possibly is becoming a source of confusion and indicative of a blurred boundary between the two institutions.

The post-2004 period: Rebirth and growth of social work

The rebirth of the profession had some historical connections with the existence of a University of Michigan-trained Ethiopian professor in Addis Ababa University's Department of Sociology. In 2001, Professor Alice Butterfield, who was the member of a team led by the former US Ambassador to Ethiopia, David H. Shinn, met with Professor Seyoum Gebreselassie. The conversation to re-open the School of Social Work started at this first meeting (Stout, 2009). In the words of Professor Seyoum Gebreselassie, the ball started "rolling again in the process of establishing a graduate programme" (Addis Ababa University, School of Social Work, 2006, 10). Finally, the School of Social Work had come out of a hibernation of three decades.

For the rebirth of the profession of social work education in Ethiopia, the contribution of those who shared a common vision for the profession is immense. The late Professor Seyoum Gebreselassie first came up with the idea of inviting expatriate professors of social work – namely Alice Butterfield, Abye Tasse, Nathan Linsk and others – as a way of realising the re-emergence of the social work profession in Ethiopia. "[H]e was [their] mentor, influencer, and inspiration" in the process of planning and implementing the project to open the graduate school of social work (Butterfield, Abye and Linsk, 2009, 78).

In 2003/2004, an assessment showed the extent of the need for qualified and trained social workers in Ethiopia and highlighted the necessity to urgently start with social work training, which marked the rebirth of social work education in Ethiopia in 2004. According to the assessment report (Johnson *et al.*, 2004), key findings were documented that supported the reopening of a school of social work in Ethiopia. One of the many factors, according to the authors, is that "83% of social service practitioners indicated interest in pursuing a Master of Social Work degree if it were offered at Addis Ababa University." (ibid., 2)

In addition to this major finding, the reopening of the School of Social Work in 2004 at Addis Ababa University was influenced by numerous factors. Firstly, there was a high demand for trained social workers both by government and civil society (NGOs). Secondly, a lack of professional social workers who could take up the leadership role to manage the new school was considered as one of the pressing issues to start social work education. Thirdly, political and ideological back-up was available from the government. The government in Ethiopia has enacted a policy for the expansion of higher education. However, these initial favourable factors for the rebirth of social work education have encountered resistance to re-institute social work training in the College of Social Sciences at Addis Ababa University. The basis of the resistance was related to the fear that the opening of social work training could be a threat for some departments in the college to lose the courses which were incorrectly placed in these departments.

Challenges such as mentioned above became the opportunity to re-establish social work education on a substantive ground. This required capable and visionary leadership from the country and abroad. Some people such as Professor Abye Tasse, who assumed the role of Dean of the new Graduate School of Social Work at Addis Ababa University, as well as Professors Alice K. Butterfield, Nathan Linsk, and Dr James Rollin (all from University of Illinois, Chicago) and Professor Andreas Eshete, the President of Addis Ababa University at the time, and Dr Melese Getu from the Department of Social Anthropology were prominent leaders in the re-establishment of the school.

Ethiopian strategy to sustain social work education

In many countries, it is common practice to start training at a higher education level by opening a diploma or bachelor's degree. In general, Ethiopia is no exception. The gradual progress is expected by starting a bachelor's degree, and then moving to a master's degree to be concluded by opening a PhD degree. The gradual and controlled practice of higher education learning was violated by the movers of social work education in Ethiopia. The School of Social Work at Addis Ababa University reopened in 2004 and violated the traditional pattern by launching a Master of Social Work programme (MSW). This was followed by the commencement of a PhD programme in 2006 after the graduation of the first cohort of MSW students who became eligible to apply for the doctorate programme.

The School of Social Work has also initiated a new pilot project of a student-led management style for the school. Since 2006, the associate and assistant deans' positions have been filled by PhD students, who shouldered the responsibilities of managing the school while at the same time pursuing their doctoral training. This continued until the first person with a PhD in Social Work and Social Development graduated in December 2009, and assumed full administrative responsibilities after November 2011.

The then leadership of the School, led by Professor Abye Tasse, had invented the wheel in a different way than what is called the traditional and controlled manner. From the first cohort of graduates of the MSW programme, seven of them were admitted to the PhD programme while they were at the same time employed as lecturers in the Graduate School of Social Work. It was a wise decision to put the PhD candidates, many of whom were not of mature age, in leadership positions where they were encouraged to exercise the management activities in the school. This practice, although very strange to the deep-rooted traditional management style of the university, has been successful for the succession of school leadership from the hands of the expatriates to the local experts.

In the absence of locally trained personnel, the Graduate School of Social Work heavily relied on expatriate staff who mainly came from the USA to take the responsibility of teaching and administration. The assistance of these expatriates was vital during the first three years of the graduate school. During the first two years (2004 to 2006) there was no permanent faculty member. All the teaching staff were either expatriate staff who came to teach one course (for about a month) or those who were temporarily transferred from other departments in the university.

The school's strategy was not limited to placing the new generation of young scholars in management positions. In 2006, when seven graduates of the MSW programme were

admitted to the PhD programme and recruited as faculty members, none had teaching experience at a university level. In order to put in place a sustainable transformation of teaching positions from the visiting professors to the local experts, a co-teaching method was introduced through which all PhD candidates were encouraged to match themselves with senior visiting professors. This exercise took place from 2006 to 2008 and paved the way for two important actions: the replacement of visiting professors who had taught in the MSW programme since 2004 by the local experts and the launching of the BSW programme in 2008.

Since 2008, the MSW and BSW programmes have been localised in terms of teaching and administration. The strategy invented by the school characterised by inside-out growth has been adopted by other schools/departments in the university. Previously, other departments and schools in the university refrained from initiating new programmes based on the assumption that they did not have adequate human resources to run such programmes. The school of social work demonstrated that if there is commitment and openness for innovation, it is possible to make a difference.

Indigenisation vis-à-vis internationalisation

Social work training, research and practice have to play dual roles. There has to be a focus on local realities in teaching, practice and research while at the same time adaptation to international standards. International experiences, research outcomes, theoretical perspectives and models of practice should be adapted to Ethiopian social, cultural, political and economic contexts. However, in a context where over 80% of the society is living in rural areas and in very poor conditions, and where there are long held values and traditions which may be specific to the Ethiopian societies, and where religions have strong influence to shape the attitude and perceptions of the society, indigenous social work perspectives and training models are of paramount importance.

One thing that may make social work education in Ethiopia different from the most urbanised West is the need to put more emphasis on rural social work. Rural social work is highly relevant to Ethiopia for many reasons, including the high proportion of the population living in rural areas and the high prevalence of rural-urban migration and international migration that need immediate intervention. Trained social workers with the basic skills to work in rural settings will empower communities to make a difference within their own home village.

However, this argument does not ignore the need to pay attention to social work training with a focus on urban communities. It is also high time Ethiopia integrated social work training methods and practice to accommodate the services required both in rural and urban settings. Unlike in the economically advanced countries where the distinction between urban and rural settlement is blurred (Ginsberg, 2011), there is a clear demarcation in Ethiopia between what is rural and what is urban. This implies that curriculum design is also easier as there are specific needs that should be addressed in rural communities which are different from urban settings.

There is a high level of urban expansion associated with various challenges such as rural-urban migration, urban displacement and relocation of communities to different

places where people used to live for decades, thus causing tensions and conflicts. This demands the incorporation of contents and techniques to equip social work students with the theoretical and practical skills to address the community needs in both settings.

The high demand for social work professionals is dwarfed by the small number of graduates being produced every year. Other universities in Ethiopia are not giving much attention to opening social work schools. Professionals trained in other fields who have occupied social work jobs in the past pose another threat. Indeed, Ethiopia needs colleagues who will pledge themselves to international solidarity to address the challenges, while maintaining the indigenous focus for social work training, research and practice.

The current challenges and future prospects

The contemporary challenges and future prospects for social work in Ethiopia are as follows:

Challenges

The challenges of social work education in Ethiopia go back to its history prior to its closure by the socialist regime. Professor Richard Weatherley, who was the faculty member of the School of Social Work in Ethiopia from 1961 to 1971 and who visited Addis Ababa University 41 years later in 2012, shares his memories as follows:

One of the challenges facing the Ethiopian faculty [in the 1960s] was to transform a social work model and curriculum adapted from developed, urbanized countries abroad to the realities of contemporary Ethiopia. Students and faculty alike had to become innovators in finding ways to assess, reshape and apply foreign concepts and models to fit local cultural beliefs and practices. (Addis Ababa University, School of Social Work, 2012)

The scope of the challenges never remains static and today the problems are by far wider and more complex than the problem of adaptation of the Western curriculum to the local (Ethiopian) context. Some of the current challenges are related to (1) the existing controversies between the high number of applicants to get admission for social work training vis-à-vis the limited interest and capacities of universities to accommodate these demands; (2) limited institutional capacities available vis-à-vis the ambitious plans by the school of social work in Addis Ababa University; (3) the unanswered question of professional identity vis-à-vis the resistance from other disciplines/professions; (4) the confusion among the employment sector/industry in clarifying the roles of social workers and those of other professionals; and (5) lack of or limited shared values with the professions/disciplines in the university systems. A detailed description of these challenges is presented below.

Capacity-related challenges: There are only two universities in Ethiopia which have opened social work training programmes: Addis Ababa University and Gondar University. Two other universities (Jimma and Adama) have designed curricula to give composite degrees called Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Social Work. The University of Gondar, which started social work training in 2010 at a BSW level, has a very limited capacity and can only accommodate about 40 students per year. The only university with better capacity in the entire country is Addis Ababa University, which has full-fledged social work training

programmes at the BSW, MSW and PhD levels. However, the capacity of the school is not compatible with the needs and demands that come from community members who have a very high interest in getting social work training. Table 12.1 below shows the incompatibilities of the demand versus the capacity to admit students. It demonstrates, in particular, the demand vis-à-vis the admission ratios of students to teachers at Addis Ababa University for two academic years, stretching across the 2011/12 and 2012/13 period.

Table 12.1: Proportion of applicants to the intake capacity of the School of Social Work

Programme	Total applicants	Admission	%	Year
BSW	134	88	66	2011/12
MSW (regular)	216	40	19	
MSW (evening)	1080	120	11	
PhD	16	No in-take	0	
Total	1446	248	17	
BSW	94	55	59	2012/13
MSW (regular)	163	42	26	
MSW (evening)	834	60	7	
PhD	17	8	47	
Total	1108	165	15	

Source: Compiled by the author from yearly application registration list

The challenge is not only related to the low intake capacity for those who want to undertake social work training but also the high demand from different governmental and non-governmental agencies for on-the-job and short-term training for their employees so as to equip them with basic social work skills such as psycho-social care, counselling, family level intervention, case management and resource mobilisation.

Challenges related to institutional capacity: Institutional capacity can be measured in terms of the available human resources, physical infrastructure, financial resources, technological support and the connections that exist with local and international institutions. As noted above, the School of Social Work was re-opened in 2004 without a single permanent faculty staff member who had social work training. Currently, out of the total of 17 faculty members available in the school, there are only three full-time staff members with the status of assistant professor; two of them have social work training at PhD level; and one has a PhD in special needs education. The remaining 13 are still PhD candidates in social work and one has completed a BSW in June 2012. This makes the school depend on external support to train students, particularly at the graduate levels (MSW, PhD). The staff-student ratio is not proportional. The following table demonstrates the ratio of the existing student population to that of the academic staff of the school.

Table 12.2: Teacher-student ratio as of September 2012

Programme	No. of students	Full-time staff members with teaching eligibility in specific programmes	Teacher-student ratio
BSW	243	17	1:14 (approximate)
MSW	68	3	1:23
PhD	39	3	1:13

Source: Student registration and instructor's course assignment documents

The challenges are not only demonstrated by the limited number of professors who can teach at the PhD level. Even at the MSW and BSW levels, those staff members with PhD candidacy status have very limited roles to play. As students, they are not required to pursue full responsibilities in teaching and advising of students. The limited number of full-time staff is coupled with limited availability of physical infrastructure such as office space; a meagre budget allocated to the school; and low technological infrastructure such as low speed Internet and library facilities.

Since its establishment, the school has been resettled in three different locations. When it was opened in 2004, the school was located at the main campus of the university. After two years, it was moved to a rented building isolated and far from the university's campus. After one and a half years, it was moved again to a newly established university campus in Akaki on the outskirts of Addis Ababa. After four and a half years' stay on the Akaki campus, the school moved back to the main campus in October 2011. This frequent movement has created inconsistencies to establish physical infrastructure and stability, and resulted into the loss of important properties.

Challenges related to professional identity: The absence of social work training for decades does not necessarily mean that services to be provided by trained social workers to the community are totally absent. The need for trained social workers and the required services necessitated by agencies and communities have been filled by other disciplines/professions. Most importantly, sociologists, psychologists, nurses, economists, anthropologists, and in rare cases, agriculturists and even engineers have been called social workers in Ethiopia because they claim to be "social workers". What matters for these professionals is not their qualification but their engagement in social services. The important criteria relate to the target population with whom they are working and for which title of job they are employed. This has been a tradition not only by the employees but also the employers. For example, it is common to read job vacancies announced for the job title "social worker" while such vacancies refer to qualifications such as sociologist or psychologist. According to a report by social work graduates (Addis Ababa University, School of Social Work, 2012), it becomes a challenge for them to get employment as many of the positions announced for a social worker could be possibly occupied by professionals from other disciplines/fields of study.

The spectrum of the challenge of professional identity also expands to the training centres/universities. There is evidence that within Addis Ababa University, the school encounters a conflict of interest from a few departments, reflected by less collaboration from faculty members and administrative staff, which could emanate from their perception

that the School of Social Work could pose a threat in the job market, not only to the graduates, but also for the professors/instructors who have been engaged in consultancy services in the area of social work for years. However, the resistance may not be attributed to the institutional apparatus. Individual professors of other disciplines in some related departments reflect their opinion in different forums that social work has become highly needed and has good growth prospects. In their perception, this scenario poses a “danger” to their personal benefits. There is implicit harassments of the social work students, faculty members and even the school administration by these professors who use their professional and administrative positions as tools of exploitation (the writer’s personal witness). As a result, the struggle to maintain the professional identity of the profession remains the main challenge ahead.

Challenges related to confusion in the employment industry: As noted above, employers have difficulties in making a distinction between social sciences disciplines and social work. When they want to employ social workers, there is a high probability of employing someone trained in sociology, anthropology, psychology and even economics or management. Due to the fact that the profession is new in the country and very limited advocacy has been done about social work, employers do not have a clear picture about what unique training and competencies social workers possess. The social work graduates have been compared to sociologists or psychologists. For many of them social work is just a “position”, not a qualification. As indicated above, many positions at the employer level in NGOs and government offices are occupied by graduates from disciplines and professions such as sociology, psychology, development training and others, who are recruited and employed on the basis of the perception by their employers that they have similar training to social work. These challenges become sources of confusion in the employment industry.

Prospects

No matter what challenges social work education in Ethiopia is facing and no matter what the forms and the degree of these challenges are, it is very clear that the social work profession has huge prospects in the future. The anticipated prospects for social work education can be attributed to the following factors:

Enabling policy environment: The Ethiopian government has a huge and strong plan to promote higher learning education which will create a fertile policy ground to promote the social work profession. As part of a macro-policy programme to expand higher education, the Government of Ethiopia has opened over 32 universities in less than 10 years. This will create a good opportunity to expand social work schools from two at present to many in the near future. This is partly dependent on the success of the current School of Social Work at Addis Ababa University in graduating the PhD candidates admitted to the school and then helping them so back to the universities located in their geographical home areas to teach and play leadership roles to initiate new programmes in social work training.

As part of a policy prospect, there is good reason to believe that the in-house training policy of the country, the commitment of which is to train PhD holders in Ethiopia, will minimise the “brain-drain” and maximise the “brain-gain”. This will help to address the challenges listed earlier and make the most of the prospects to expand social work

education. In the history of the country's higher learning training, many people have been sent abroad for higher education training. However the majority of them have remained abroad. This is one of the major reasons for the brain drain from Ethiopia, and Africa in general. Other reasons include globalisation and the integration of the world economy; economic and political development failures in Africa; immigration and refugee policies in Europe and the United States and Africa's colonial background (Chimanikire, 2005). Evidence shows that there are over 300,000 skilled Africans of whom 30,000 are PhD holders who migrated from Africa.¹

A number of initiatives are being undertaken in Ethiopia towards ensuring human rights and justice. However, important policy level steps are yet to take place, in particular in the areas of the formulation of social protection strategies and programmes. For example, the Social Protection Policy that replaces the previous Social Welfare and Development Policy has not yet been approved by the House of Representatives. The new social protection policy will focus on the realisation of social security services in the country which in turn will demand training of hundreds and thousands of social workers to address the needs of the citizens by providing the necessary social services. With regard to the realisation of the policy in terms of producing more social work professionals, a National Task Force has been formed under the guardianship of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA). In this task force, the School of Social Work at Addis Ababa University is expected to play an active role in the initiation and implementation of training programmes for social workers who will be placed to work at the grassroots level.

Promising economic growth and socioeconomic transformation: In relative terms, Ethiopia is currently in a better growth path with regard to economic and social transformation at the national level compared to 15 years ago. According to Nganwa (2013, 3):

Ethiopia is one of the fastest growing economies in Sub-Saharan Africa, with an average gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of 8.2% between 2000 and 2011. This was significantly higher than the Sub-Saharan average (4.7%) or the East Africa average (6.7%) over the same period.

Many people have started to earn a better income. There are more job opportunities in the country today, and thousands of people are engaged in new entrepreneurship activities. These opportunities enable people to join new social ventures accompanied by new challenges in terms of economic and social security that call for professional social work services.

On the other hand, due to the fast occurrence of urbanisation and urban renovation through the expansion of new roads and condominium villages, the long-existing traditional social fabric, such as social networks, remains in danger. People are displaced from their original neighbourhoods to new settlements (mostly condominium houses) as the result of the renewal programmes that take place in the hearts of cities and towns. Although it is a challenge for the people who are victims of development-induced displacement, the government will certainly be looking for professionals who will deal with those problems related to urbanisation, in general, and displacement, in particular.

¹ See <http://www.aracorporation.org/files/factsandfigures.pdf> [accessed 15 January 2013].

This will open opportunities for social work schools to expand their training programmes both in the number of student admission as well as levels of qualifications needed.

The new paradigm to promote social work education in Africa

Historically, African social work education has been highly linked to Western education systems, theories and curricula (cf. Kreitzer, 2012). Since very recently, there has been a strong belief that Africa can contribute to knowledge production and theorising social work for the rest of the world. African scholars have the capacity and the passion to contribute to social work's body of knowledge. As described by Butterfield and Tasse (2012), there are windows of hope that Africa will be the knowledge hub in the Southern Hemisphere. The authors have noted that young scholars who are competent and energetic are emerging in the social science fields.

The new paradigm in Africa towards creating a knowledge hub and indigenous teaching practices is linked to the current wave of social and economic transformation in the region. Africa has now become the centre of attention around the globe as there are abundant natural resources, including land for agriculture which covers 61% of the total farm land on the globe. There are, therefore, promising conditions for economic and social development (Eighth African Development Forum, 2012). Institutions in Africa, including the African Union, have started to realise that without social welfare services to its people, Africa will not grow as expected. The Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa (ASSWA) submitted a proposal to NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development – the economic and social development wing of the African Union) looking for funding to assist in the establishment of post-graduate social work training in five African countries, including Ethiopia. The proposal was submitted with the understanding that the African Union is currently supporting development programmes including education and training (Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa, 2012).

This calls for African scholars, of whom the majority have been trained in other countries across the globe, to think differently in terms of relying their education and scholarship development on the basis of the Western model they are acquainted with. African-based research by African scholars has become the current tendency. Further, the active involvement of the Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa (ASSWA) to strengthen the institutional capacity as well as the formation of regional chapters to contribute to social work education is another paradigm change showing that Africa is responding to its own challenges in terms of promoting social work education. ASSWA, for example, had organised its first conference in South Africa in October 2012 where African researchers, educators and practitioners in partnership with other international scholars presented their work and shared their experiences. This created the opportunity for participating schools to learn from one another. Ethiopia has played a great role in promoting social work education in Africa by having a social work scholar serving as a member of the executive committee of ASSWA. Such involvement in Pan-African initiatives further enhances the prospects for social work education in Ethiopia.

Partnership as a short- and medium-term strategy to address existing challenges

Finally, promoting social work education in Ethiopia is an issue of partnership. Partnership at the local, regional and international levels is needed to continue building on the existing strengths and to make a difference in the future. The international partnership with social work schools, particularly of the United States of America (Jane Addams College of Social Work, University of Illinois at Chicago, and the Graduate School of Social Work, Dominican University, California) is a case to mention. Faculties from these institutions have been teaching, advising and mentoring students of Addis Ababa University especially at the MSW and PhD levels since the beginning of the School of Social Work's post-graduate programmes. The contribution of professors from the two universities is not only in teaching, they have also been involved in various projects and have trained community groups drawn from non-governmental organisations, government departments and from universities, focusing on training in community development and child-family welfare issues.

The School of Social Work at Addis Ababa University is committed to continuing the existing partnership with the two universities and others, particularly in the areas of research and teaching. As the school is already in the process of building its local faculties, the future direction of the partnership should focus on running joint research projects, student mentorship and community services. This does not mean that the need to seek assistance in the area of teaching will stop immediately. There is still a long way to go until the school can completely rely on its local staff to teach at all programme levels.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is time to celebrate not only the rebirth of social work education in Ethiopia, but also its contribution to the expansion of social work education in East Africa. This celebration, however, is not marking an end of success. It should be, rather, a beginning of the journey of struggle to ensure that social work training continues to expand in Africa at large without compromising its quality, local context and international nature. It is not only a hope but it should also be a vision to everyone in the social work profession to foresee the time when Africa will be a centre of excellence for social work education.

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Breaking New Grounds: Conceptual and Methodological Framework of a Regional Research Project

Helmut Spitzer and Janestic M. Twikirize

Introduction

The empirical study on which this chapter is based was conducted in four countries in East Africa, namely: Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda. The research was conducted in 2011 and involved 2,000 respondents from different fields related to social work. The research topic was: “The Role of Social Work in Poverty Reduction and the Realisation of Millennium Development Goals in East Africa”. The study was part of a bigger project to promote social work in the region – the PROSOWO project (Promotion of Professional Social Work in East Africa). The research was unique in as far as it provided – for the first time ever – comprehensive empirical data on social work education and practice in these four countries.

The study adopted a uniform conceptual framework and similar methodology and tools. Sampling was done at the country level, bearing in mind the socioeconomic, political and educational context in these countries. The sample size was also influenced by the available resources in the respective countries, with Rwanda and Tanzania ultimately having relatively smaller samples than Kenya and Uganda due to limited funds allocated to the project.¹ Nonetheless, efforts were made to have the samples as representative as possible and to ensure that the categories of respondents were comparable cross-nationally. Data analysis tools were developed at the regional level but countries undertook data entry and analysis individually and produced country-level reports and national publications (see Twikirize *et al.*, 2013; Kalinganire and Rutikanga, 2014; Mabeyo, Ndung’u and Riedl; 2014; Wairire *et al.*, 2014). Key variables for comparative analyses were consensually agreed upon and the analysis jointly done.

¹ This is due to the fact that Kenya and Uganda are official partner countries of the Austrian Development Cooperation which funded the research through the APPEAR programme (Austrian Partnership Programme in Higher Education & Research for Development). Rwanda and Tanzania only featured as “associated partners”; consequently their budget was relatively small.

This chapter provides the conceptual and methodological framework of the empirical study and serves as a reference for the subsequent chapters focusing on East Africa and the respective regional and country-specific findings.

Conceptual framework

In order to understand the role of social work in poverty reduction and the overall social development in East Africa, six key conceptual aspects were referred to, namely: poverty reduction; the Millennium Development Goals; social development; gender equality; cultural relevance; and professional social work (cf. Twikirize *et al.*, 2013). These aspects are elaborated in the following sections.

Poverty reduction

Poverty, in all its manifestations, is a major impediment to the development of African nations and the quality of life of the citizens. Despite an average economic growth rate of 6% in 2011 in the countries of the East African Community, the per capita income is among the lowest in the world, with significant differences between the countries (Society for International Development [SID]), 2013).² The majority of the people remains trapped in poverty conditions which can be described as both severe and chronic. Chronically poor people experience deprivation for many years, perhaps for their entire live, and they often pass on poverty to future generations through their children (Overseas Development Institute, 2014).

Poverty must be conceptualised as a multi-dimensional and complex phenomenon that goes far beyond a lack of income. The United Nations' Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite measure of indicators along the three dimensions of life expectancy, educational attainment and living standards. The higher the index, the higher a country's human development is regarded. In this index, the East African states rank as countries with "low human development" (UNDP, 2013).³ According to Sen (1999), poverty must be seen as the deprivation of basic capabilities. People who live in situations of poverty are at the same time subjected to a lack of freedom and social exclusion. Sen's (1999) perspective of "unfreedom" is suitable to understand the multi-faceted expressions of poverty and the denial to millions of people the basic freedom to survive. This includes famine and chronic malnutrition; limited access to clean water, health facilities and education; as well as to gainful employment opportunities and social protection mechanisms. Additionally, the concept of social exclusion contributes to a thorough understanding of poverty since it refers to certain groups who are systematically disadvantaged and discriminated against in society (Desai and Solas, 2012). People affected by deprivation, social exclusion and different forms of unfreedom are the major target groups of social workers on the African continent; hence, working with poor, marginalised, vulnerable and disadvantaged people constitutes a major activity in social work practice.

² Burundi has the poorest economy with a per capita GPD of \$271 in 2011 compared to Uganda with \$487; Tanzania \$532; Rwanda \$583; and Kenya \$808 (SID, 2013).

³ In the Human Development Report 2013, the HDI-ranks are as follows (out of 186 countries): Kenya 145; Tanzania 152; Uganda 161; Rwanda 167; Burundi 178 (UNDP, 2013).

In our study, we sought, amongst other aspects, to investigate the link between poverty and social work and the contribution of social work towards poverty reduction; the locations where social workers are employed since poverty levels vary between rural and urban contexts; the levels of social work interventions (micro, mezzo and macro); preferred practice methods; and the particular roles and responsibilities performed by social workers.

Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) gained a lot of international recognition and emerged as a key reference point in discourses about poverty reduction and international development cooperation from their inception at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000. With the overall objective of halving world poverty by the year 2015, the MDGs consist of eight goals with corresponding specific targets and indicators. The goals are: 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; 2. Achieve universal primary education; 3. Promote gender equality and empower women; 4. Reduce child mortality; 5. Improve maternal health; 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; 7. Ensure environmental sustainability; 8. Develop a global partnership for development (United Nations, 2008). Although the MDGs received some serious criticism, particularly from scholars in the global South (such as Amin, 2006; Easterly, 2008; Kabeer, 2010), they constitute an ambitious set of objectives and a pragmatic framework for action to reduce extreme poverty, disease and deprivation (Sachs, 2005). They cover key sectors where social work professionals operate, such as community-based poverty eradication initiatives; health and nutritional services; interventions to upgrade children's education; and empowerment of women who have a low social and economic status in many African countries. While there has been remarkable success in some parts of the developing world, the sub-Saharan region is largely off-track when it comes to the achievement of the MDGs (UN Millennium Project, 2005, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa *et al.*, 2013).

In this study, the level of understanding and awareness amongst social work stakeholders about the MDGs; their particular level of contribution to the achievement of the goals; and the extent to which MDGs-related issues are covered in social work training were explored.

Social development

A crucial element in our research was a theoretical and methodological understanding that identifies social work within a broader contextual framework of social development. Although not a new concept in social work, current debates on social development positioned it as an approach which addresses social issues such as poverty in a comprehensive and integrated manner (Midgley, 2010; see also Lombard in this volume). In general, social development is an interdisciplinary field with a focus on improving the living conditions of people and a clear goal of enhancing human welfare and well-being (Pawar and Cox, 2010). Midgley (2014, 13) defines social development as "a process of planned social change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole within

the context of a dynamic multifaceted development process". This definition underscores social work's social change and transformative functions, and it provides a reference to the importance of macro-social work practice. Key features of developmental social work are a rights-based approach and the use of investment strategies, challenging social workers to make extensive use of interventions that specifically enhance standards of living (Midgley, 2010). There can be no doubt that in the past decades, social development emerged as the most influential theoretical and conceptual model for social work education and practice in African contexts (Mupedziswa, 2001; Kreitzer, 2012; Butterfield and Abye, 2013; Cox and Pawar, 2013).

Based on previous studies on social work education in Southern and Eastern Africa (Hochfeld *et al.*, 2009; Hochfeld, Mupedziswa and Selipsky, 2010), it was our intention to explore the knowledge and level of application of this particular approach in social work education and practice in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

Gender equality

Although gender issues are covered in the MDGs, and although they feature as a key component in social development, they deserve much broader attention. In the view of a Tanzanian female scholar, gender refers to the "distinctive qualities of each sex that are culturally determined. Gender relations therefore essentially emanate from social relations between women and men, which are indeed power relations which portray inherent gender inequalities." (Koda, 1993, 2) Socially constructed differences between ideas of what is male and female also define a person's rights, responsibilities and opportunities in life. In East Africa, women are disproportionately affected by chronic poverty, ill health and illiteracy, and they have limited access to and control of productive assets, which exacerbates their vulnerability. They carry the triple burden of caring for children, the elderly and the sick; of spending long hours collecting water and firewood; and of processing and producing food. They work on farms and family enterprises for little or no income (UN Millennium Project, 2005). For many women, "the life cycle is in fact a vicious circle which started with their mothers and, unless serious steps are taken will be continued in their children" (Mabala and Kamazima, 1995, 1). One should not forget that in many African contexts, women and girls are exposed to multifaceted forms of gender-based violence (Kasente, 2011), and, in addition, suffer from the consequences of rape and other forms of sexual violence in contexts of war and armed conflict (Daley, 2008).

The concept of gender equality refers to the demand of improving the social and economic status of girls and women. Kabeer (2003) argues that women and men experience poverty differently and unequally and become poor through different yet related processes. Hence, poverty and gender inequalities have to be tackled at the societal level as well as through explicit interventions tailored to addressing specific forms of disadvantage. The social work profession has a strong commitment to enable gender equality, to tackle the multiple forms of women's oppression and to empower them at local, national and international levels (Dominelli, 2012).

Consequently, the focus of our research was on the link between gender and social work; the roles of social workers to promote gender equality; and the level of how adequately social work students are prepared to handle gender issues in their training.

Cultural relevance

A key concern in African social work discourse is the question of how relevant and appropriate methods, concepts and theories are with regard to local social environments and cultural contexts (Rankopo and Osei-Hwedie, 2011). If social work ought to be culturally relevant, then culture becomes the central reference for the profession (Gray and Coates, 2008). But the term 'culture' can be misleading or – as is often the case when it comes to African contexts – oversimplified. When talking about African culture, the notion is too often narrowed to something which is interpreted as being 'traditional', as if culture is static and does not change over time. In fact, there is nothing such as an 'African culture'; the term is rather irrelevant when not used in plural and related to particular local contexts. In other words, culturally relevant social work has to be contextualised which means that the profession has to be aware of these contexts and develop practice models and strategies that are not only relevant but acceptable to communities in these contexts (Twikirize *et al.*, 2013).

But there is also a certain danger in a stance towards culture that is too uncritical and that we also sought to bear in mind in our research. Culture has also a tendency to maintain existing power hierarchies and a potential to violate human rights, most prominently under the umbrella of traditional and/or religious norms and beliefs. Culture can be very ambivalent, or, in the words of Maathai (2009, 164), "culture is a double-edged sword" that can be used both for empowerment as well as for discrimination, exploitation and oppression.

In our study, the relevance of contextualised social work was explored with regard to local knowledge systems, resources and coping mechanisms; to social work training; and to the compatibility of social work methods with cultural values and traditions. An essential conceptual element in this regard was the incorporation of the views of people living on a grassroots level into the research.

Professional social work

The overall intention in our study was to conduct basic research on social work with regard to issues of poverty reduction, social development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and by doing so to enhance the professional status of social work in education, practice, research and policy. This intention is based on a notion of social work as "a research-informed and research-oriented discipline" (Wilson *et al.*, 2008, 235). For the context of East Africa, this is a rather innovative way of conceptualising social work since the profession has been notoriously under-researched in the past. It is also a subject that is mainly associated with practice and not so much with the characteristics of a scientific discipline. Empirically based research findings should thus also contribute to a thorough and relevant theoretical base upon which social work practice is conceptualised. Payne (2005) refers to the relationship between social work theory and practice as having

influence on each other. There is criticism that theory is inadequate to provide the kinds of services practitioners want to offer or that social work education is not helping social workers to transfer knowledge effectively (Mwansa, 2010).

The challenge for professional social work lies in the reflection of the interconnectedness between theory, education, research and practice, and in the establishment of a coherent synthesis of these areas. Education and training is important because it is the preparatory phase for social work practice. How well social workers carry out their roles in society is foremost dependent on the adequacy and relevancy of the preparation they receive. Other key elements in understanding the status of professional social work include benchmarking the legal and policy environment in which social work is practised as well as organisational and non-organisational factors that impact on social work and influence its contribution to social development.

In our research, we tried to investigate these factors. It should be noted that currently, the practice of social work in East Africa is not legally regulated and there is so far no statutory requirement for registration of social workers. Other areas of investigation revolved around issues of professional identity; awareness of and membership in professional associations; assessment of current curricula; and engagement of social work educators and students in research.

Study design and methods

The study adopted a cross-sectional study design which meant that data was collected at one point in time. Cross-sectional designs rely on existing variations in the independent variable(s) in the sample (de Vaus, 2001). A mixed methods approach involving both quantitative and qualitative methods was applied. Rubin and Babbie (2014) argue that mixed methods are useful in incorporating the objective and subjective aspects of the phenomenon under investigation. The adoption of this mixed methods design was crucial in providing a thorough understanding of social work in East Africa. Both methods were concurrently applied. Quantitative methods aimed at generating precise and generalisable data on social work in East Africa, particularly with regard to variables such as gender, social work employment, social work positions, educational levels, and the extent of application of different approaches, skills and methods in practice. Qualitative methods were applied to gain a deeper understanding of the context of social work as well as to document experiences and meanings attached to such experiences at different levels of social work education, practice and policy. Because not much investigation has been undertaken on social work in East Africa, the concurrent mixed methods design was deemed appropriate to not only describe and generate generalisable findings but also to provide deeper and broader meanings of the context and experience of social work in the region.

A significant aspect of the study was its embedded comparative design. Besides its application at the country level, the study was conceptualised and designed in such a way that it would generate comparable data across the four countries in East Africa. Hence, the categories of respondents, the research tools, the analysis frameworks and, to some extent, the sampling procedures were replicated. The need for comparison was based on

the appreciation of similarities and differences in the socioeconomic and political context in which social work is practised in East Africa.

Study population

The population categories included social work practitioners, employers, educators, students, clients and policy makers. Each of these sub-populations was considered significant in trying to understand the nature of social work as well as its actual and potential contribution to poverty reduction and social development within the region. Social work practitioners are involved in the day-to-day interventions in the field while the employers share the experiences of social work; they are also in a position to evaluate their own agencies' roles in social development as well as the specific contribution of the social work profession. Social work educators and students were included in order to clarify issues regarding the social work curriculum and the inherent challenges within the current education context. It was considered crucial to include social work clients as the direct beneficiaries of the services. Their experiences were especially important in pointing out clients' priorities, experiences and the appropriateness of social work interventions. Finally, policy makers and other persons occupying positions of leadership at the national and sub-national levels were a critical category in as far as the research questions were concerned.

Sampling procedures

Multi-stage cluster sampling was done to select regions and specific areas of study within countries. According to Babbie (2005), cluster sampling may be used when it is either impossible or impractical to compile an exhaustive list of the elements composing the target population. All the four countries lack an exhaustive database of social development agencies and more specifically social workers. Geopolitical divisions of the respective countries were selected as clusters to ensure national representative samples of agencies and social workers employed therein. Uganda and Tanzania are divided into geopolitical units known as regions while Kenya and Rwanda are subdivided into provinces. These formed the basis of sampling of sub-regions (also known as districts). The sampling frames for agencies in each region were obtained at the district or sub-regional level. Both rural and urban areas were included in order to decipher the differences and similarities in the distribution and nature of social work and the extent to which vulnerable populations are targeted for professional social work services. Other considerations in the selection of study sites were the availability of social development programmes so that the extent of employment of social workers and the roles they play could be documented. Purposive sampling was done to select both state and non-state agencies in each sub-region.

In Tanzania, field data was collected from 25 social welfare agencies across the five main regions. Within these regions, a snowball method was adopted due to lack of a reliable social work database in Tanzania. The entry point was government agencies at regional level who then would direct the researchers to other agencies involved in social development projects/programmes within those particular areas. In Uganda, lists of agencies were obtained from the community development departments at the district

level. In Kenya, researchers compiled lists of agencies at the regional level and used the contacts of social workers to reach these agencies. In Rwanda, a purposive sample of public and private agencies was targeted based mainly on the judgment that they (were likely to) employ social workers.

Table 13.1 shows the broad areas of study within each of the four countries, while Table 13.2 provides a matrix of respondent categories and the methods of data collection.

Table 13.1: Areas of study within countries

Uganda (regions and districts)	Kenya (provinces and districts)	Tanzania (regions)	Rwanda (provinces)
Central region Kampala	Nairobi province Kibera Korogocho Mukuru	Dar es Salaam	Eastern province Kayonza Rwamagana Bugesera
Eastern region Iganga Bugiri	Coastal province Mombasa Kwale Kilifi	Iringa	Northern province Gicumbi Gakenke Musanze
Northern region Gulu Nwoya	Eastern province Embu Kitui	Ruvuma	Southern province Huye Gisagara
Western region Mbarara	Rift Valley province Nakuru Kabarnet Kobujoi	Lindi	Kigali City
		Mtwara	

In each organisation, at least two respondents were selected, namely, one social work practitioner and one other respondent in a senior management position to represent the employment agency. The criterion for the selection of the practitioner was based on the job specification as social worker and not necessarily on the person specifications. This eventually led to the inclusion of practitioners in social work positions who did not necessarily possess social work qualifications. The inclusion of these respondents was deliberate in order to examine the extent of employment of qualified social workers. However, specific questions that related to social work training were skipped by such respondents.

Selection of higher education institutions, educators and students

Purposive sampling was also used in selecting higher education institutions where both government and non-governmental institutions were selected in order to get a balanced view of findings and also to identify differences in the delivery of social work education and services.

For social work students, a basic criteria was used, namely, those in their final year of study. Thus, in every selected higher education institution, questionnaires were administered to all final year social work students present on an appointed day previously agreed upon. Students enrolled in the undergraduate degree or diploma programmes were

selected. Since only two universities (both of them in Uganda) had a Master of Social Work programme at the time of data collection, post-graduate students were omitted from the sample in order to maintain comparability of results. At least two social work educators were selected from each institution and either completed a questionnaire and/or an interview. The selected educators had to be full-time members of the faculty. A total of 100 educators from 21 institutions participated in the study. In total, 2,000 individual respondents participated in the study (including social work clients who participated in focus group discussions).

Data collection methods and tools

Tools for data collection were jointly developed and standardised for all the four countries. Pretesting of the tools was done in Kenya and subsequently, tools were edited based on emerging issues from the pretest. For Tanzania, further piloting of the research tools was done with the wider population of social workers during the Annual General Meeting organised by the Tanzania Association of Social Workers held on 16 August 2011. No significant issues for correction emerged and, therefore, no alterations were made to the standard tools.

The primary data collection methods included researcher-administered questionnaires, personal interviews and focus group discussions. Structured questionnaires were used to gather information from social work practitioners, employers, educators and students. The questionnaires included both open- and closed-ended questions to obtain in-depth data about respondent's experience. Semi-structured interviews were held with employers, educators and key informants. Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect data from students in a single sitting. This minimised the non-response rate to negligible levels. It also allowed for explanation of the study objectives to the students and the motivation to participate and complete the questionnaires. Focus group discussions were held with clients. Table 13.2 shows the different categories of respondents and the specific methods used for data collection from each respondent category.

Table 13.2: Number of respondents within countries and data collection matrix

	Practitioners	Employers		Educators			Students	Key informants	Clients
Method/ tool	Questionnaires	Questionnaires	Interviews	Questionnaires	Interviews	# of HEIs*	Questionnaires	Interviews	# of FGDs**
Country									
Kenya	202	78	43	19	20	8	215	15	8
Uganda	200	140	67	18	8	8	213	6	8
Rwanda	103	27	17	10	8	3	114	6	4
Tanzania	100	35	20	9	8	2	99	8	4
Total	605	280	147	56	44	21	641	35	24

	Practitioners	Employers		Educators			Students	Key informants	Clients
Method/ tool	Questionnaires	Questionnaires	Interviews	Questionnaires	Interviews	# of HEIs*	Questionnaires	Interviews	# of FGDs**
Country									
Criteria for inclusion	Occupying a social work position in an agency	Managerial position in agency		Full-time staff in social work academic unit at selected university/ HEI		Having a social work diploma or degree programme	Final year under-graduate degree or diploma students	Government ministry, department or agency responsible for social development. Institutional body in charge of higher education, other policy level position	Users of services of any of the selected agencies. Willingness to participate

* HEI – Higher education institutions

** FGDs – Focus group discussions

Practitioner questionnaires sought information relating to their employment, qualifications, positions, roles and responsibilities within the agencies. In addition, they were asked about the social work methods and skills applied and their specific contribution to poverty reduction, MDGs and social development, among others. Information from social workers was complemented with that from employers, particularly in reference to the nature and level of service delivery, major target groups, priority sectors of operation and the ways in which their agencies contributed to achieving the MDGs, in general, and reducing poverty, in particular. For employers, in addition to the structured questionnaires, personal interviews were used to gain clarity of specific issues, including descriptions of programmes and interventions of the agencies and opinions about the role of social workers. Educators' and students' questionnaires mainly focused on the curricula, particularly as regards coverage of social development, MDGs and gender issues. Personal interviewing was used to collect information from key informants. An interview guide with a set of questions in line with the objectives and major themes in the study was used.

Participants for focus group discussions (FGDs) were mobilised through social work agencies and included both male and female participants in order to ensure a balanced gender perspective on the issues under investigation. The discussions were systematically organised to ensure homogeneity and maximise participation. Participants in each focus group ranged from eight to 12 in the four countries. In Kenya and Uganda, eight FGDs (four for males and four for female clients) were conducted in each country while in Rwanda and Tanzania, four FGDs were conducted in each country (two for male and two women clients), making a total of 24.

Besides primary data, secondary data was collected to augment the findings. These included key policy documents, poverty reduction strategic papers at the national level, reports on implemented programmes and projects, social work curriculum documents, MDG reports and other relevant documentation.

Data management, analysis and reporting

A phased approach was used to check data for accuracy and completeness. For qualitative data, ongoing editing enabled researchers to identify inconsistencies as well as issues for follow-up during subsequent interviews. Country research teams checked data for completeness, consistency and accuracy during and after fieldwork. For quantitative data, a data entry screen was developed at the regional level to ensure uniformity and comparability of data sets at a later stage of the analysis. Subsequently, each country research team entered data directly into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The data sets were further cleaned of errors before data analysis. Bivariate analysis was particularly employed to show relationships between selected variables. This level of analysis was based on the descriptive-exploratory nature of the research (Neuman, 2014), and was considered adequate to describe the nature and contribution of social work to social development and poverty reduction in the region.

For qualitative data, verbatim transcribing was done for all audio-recorded interviews and discussions after careful translation of interviews from local languages into English. Coding schemes were developed at country level and thematic and content analysis undertaken. The research teams were careful to identify latent issues in the data collected, particularly with regard to perceptions of clients. Each country produced independent reports based on their data sets. For the regional comparison, selected variables which significantly emerged from the country-specific reports were agreed upon for further analysis and inclusion in the regional report. These included, among others, the socio-demographic characteristics of social work practitioners; the highest qualifications of practitioners and educators; focus of the curricula; employment patterns; social work approaches and methods adopted; social work and gender; and professional identity of social workers. It is on the basis of this that a comparative chapter on social work in East Africa has been produced (see next chapter).

Research clearance and other ethical considerations

Research protocols were submitted to the relevant bodies within each country to obtain approval and ethical clearance in accordance with the scientific research standards and requirements (Hardwick and Worsely, 2011). In Uganda, clearance was granted by the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST); in Tanzania, by the Tanzanian Commission of Science and Technology; in Rwanda, by the National University of Rwanda Research Commission Ethics Committee; and in Kenya, by the Kenya National Council of Science and Technology. All other ethical principles (informed consent, confidentiality, objectivity in reporting and ethical publishing practices, among others) were adhered to. Careful attention has been paid to objectivity in reporting as

well as protection of identities of respondents in order to ensure confidentiality of the respondents' opinions.

Limitations of the study

This study attempted to follow scientific procedures for social work research from problem definition to sampling, data collection, analysis and reporting. Major themes considered critical to social work and social development were explored and within each country, steps were taken to enlist the participation of key stakeholders in social work, including practitioners, employers, educators, students, policy makers and clients. Nonetheless, the study was not without limitations. To begin with, due to the lack of a systematic database on social workers in all the four countries, it was extremely difficult to identify professional social workers and their specific practice areas. To counter this, logical judgment of agencies likely to employ social workers was made, and it is on this basis that the selection of agencies was done. This, in the end, generated information that was useful for future action in favour of social work since some primary social work agencies were found not to be employing professionally qualified social workers. The inclusion of the views of unqualified social workers employed as social work practitioners or educators had the potential to influence some aspects of the study results in relation to the overall understanding of social work in the region. This was foreseen and questionnaires were designed to allow non-trained social workers to skip questions that were not applicable to them, particularly regarding the coverage and adequacy of the social work training.

Another limitation refers to the analysis of the social work curricula within countries. Since just a few institutions with social work programmes were selected, the findings on the curricula may not be totally generalisable. This also refers to the social work educators' qualifications and opinions. To minimise these limitations, deliberate steps were taken to purposively select institutions based on critical parameters such as their being public or privately owned as well as the longevity of the social work programmes in order to achieve some level of representativeness in the sample.

In some countries, data collection was done at the time of unstable environments in some universities due to industrial action by the faculty. In Tanzania, the Institute of Social Work was undergoing a critical period of disputation between the academic staff and management; while in Uganda, the faculty staff had been on a sit-down strike shortly before the commencement of data collection over what was deemed low remuneration. Besides disrupting the data collection exercise, such an atmosphere had the potential to tilt responses towards negative opinions, especially regarding social work education.

Despite the above limitations, the findings of this study are still considered valid and largely novel in the sense that no known study of this magnitude had been done before in the region. Furthermore, the triangulation of information by data source and methods greatly increased the validity of the research findings.

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Professional Social Work in East Africa: Empirical Evidence

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Introduction

This chapter provides a comparative analysis of findings from the empirical study conducted in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda as part of the PROSOWO project. The study was executed in 2011 and involved a total of 2,000 respondents, including social work practitioners, employers, educators, students, policy-level informants as well as clients. The detailed conceptual and methodological aspects of the study are presented in the foregoing chapter. Due to the massive data collected, it is not possible to make a detailed presentation of all the variables in a single chapter (for the detailed country-specific research outcomes, see Twikirize *et al.*, 2013; Kalinganire and Rutikanga, 2014; Mabeyo, Ndung'u, and Riedl, 2014; Wairire *et al.*, 2014). A consensus was therefore reached amongst the core research team on the specific variables to focus on for purposes of this comparative chapter. The main goal is to provide a snapshot of social work in East Africa as a region but also to underscore the peculiarities within given countries since this is not a homogenous community. The subsequent country-specific chapters in this book build on this analysis but also focus on prominent themes arising out of the country-level findings.

Some of the comparative aspects covered in this chapter include: the demographic profiles of social work practitioners; the nature of employment of social workers; the levels of intervention and the predominant social work methods used in practice; social workers' contribution to poverty reduction and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); major target groups; professional identity; culture; and gender equality. From an education and training perspective, the issues examined include the professional qualifications of the social work educators and curriculum-related issues such as fieldwork, research and policy. The sources of reference materials are also examined to illustrate the extent of localisation of education. Students' employment aspirations in terms of the preferred nature and practice locality are presented since these may have a bearing on the relevance of social work to the prevailing social conditions in the region and the specific

countries. The chapter concludes by highlighting the commonalities of social work in East Africa, including the challenges that need to be addressed.

Describing the workforce: Sex, age and qualifications of social work practitioners

The practitioner characteristics in terms of sex, age category and qualifications were examined in order to understand the nature and quality of the social work workforce in the region. In addition, the types of agencies that employ social workers as well as the locality where the agencies operate were investigated. Table 14.1 presents the findings.

Table 14.1: Sex, age and highest qualification of social work practitioners

Variable	Response	Country (%)				Total (N=605)
		Kenya (N=202)	Uganda (N=200)	Tanzania (N=100)	Rwanda (N=103)	
Sex	Male	36.1	53.5	40.0	33.0	42.0
	Female	63.9	46.5	60.0	67.0	58.0
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Age	Below 30 years	54.0	45.5	11.0	19.4	38.2
	30-50 years	45.0	48.0	76.0	78.6	56.9
	Above 50 years	1.0	6.5	13.0	1.9	5.0
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Highest qualification	Certificate in social work	16.3	2.5	9.0	4.9	8.6
	Diploma in social work	50.0	12.0	14.0	10.7	24.8
	Advanced diploma in social work			20.0		3.3
	Bachelor's degree in social work	24.8	34.0	23.0	83.5	37.5
	Master's degree in social work	1.0	3.5	6.0		2.5
	Other	7.9	48.0	28.0	1.0	23.3
	Total	100	100	100	100	100

Sex distribution

The majority of social work practitioners across East Africa were female (58%). Rwanda had the lowest proportion of male practitioners (33%) while Uganda presented a unique scenario where more than a half of the practitioners (53.5%) were male. Historically, social work in Uganda was offered as one of a few humanities-based professional courses at university level along with law and journalism. As such, the entry points were usually high and very competitive. Due to the severe gender disparities in performance at pre-university entry examinations, enrolment into the Bachelor of Social Work programme tended to be skewed towards male students. With the introduction of affirmative action in favour of female students and the privatisation of tertiary education in the early and mid-1990s, this pattern seems to be changing generally in enrolment in tertiary education, including the social work programmes.

Age of practitioners

The highest proportion of social work practitioners in Kenya (54%) and Uganda (45.5%) were aged below 30 years, giving the two countries a considerably younger workforce than Rwanda (19.4%) and Tanzania (11%). A young workforce is of advantage to the region in terms of dynamism and probably the level of uptake of new technologies and innovations in social work. Demographically, the middle age category is also presumed the most productive age group in practice, which presents an opportunity to strengthen the social work output and contribution to development if this workforce is well harnessed. While all the four countries have a relatively low life expectancy with an average of 55 years and a high proportion of young people with 66% of East Africans being younger than 25 years of age (Society for International Development, 2013), Tanzania's situation appears slightly different with regard to older adults in the social workforce, with 13% of the practitioners interviewed aged above 50 years. This situation can be associated with the fact that Tanzania has a long history of practising social work. The profession was first introduced in 1947 and its training in 1974. From then, social work services continued to be expanded in different regions of the country.

Social work practitioners' qualifications

In aggregate terms, the majority (37.5%) of practitioners had a bachelor's degree in social work followed by those with a diploma in social work (24.8%). However, there were significant variations within the four countries. Whereas in Kenya, 50% of the practitioners had a diploma in social work as their highest qualification, in Rwanda 83.5% had a bachelor's degree, while in Uganda, close to a half of practitioners (48%) had their highest qualifications in other fields (although 37 out of the 96 individuals within this category had an additional qualification in social work, with the net percentage of those who had no social work background at 29.5%). It is rather ironical that Rwanda, which has the youngest social work programme in the region (the first degree programme was introduced in 1998), also has the highest proportion of practitioners with the relevant qualification in social work (83.5%). The differences in the qualification of practitioners do not, therefore, reflect the output from the training institutions but rather the deployment patterns as well as the policy environment for social work practice. The levels of recognition of the roles of social work and the subsequent opportunities for deployment by either the state or non-state actors may differ in these countries. As will be observed in the employment patterns, the largest employer of social workers in Uganda and Kenya is NGOs; while in Rwanda and Tanzania, it is the government. The government being in charge of policy may also be better placed to enforce recruitment standards, especially if it recognises social work as a distinct profession. Conversely, NGOs offer social work positions but may not be very strict on the discipline-specific credentials of the person who is recruited as a social worker. In Uganda, for example, related disciplines of development studies, counselling and education regularly appear in advertisements for social work positions. Similarly, in Kenya, a general blanket of social science graduates and in some situations sociology graduates are recruited for social work-related jobs.

Type and location of agencies where social workers were employed

Social workers were mainly employed in government departments, non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations. A few were employed in private/commercial organisations. The type and location of social work agencies as well as the distribution of social workers therein varied by country as indicated in Table 14.2.

Table 14.2: Type and location of agencies where social workers were employed

Variable	Response	Country (%)				Total
		Kenya	Uganda	Tanzania	Rwanda	
Employment agency	Government	33.2	15.0	71.0	55.3	37.2
	Non-governmental	54.5	70.5	27.0	31.1	51.2
	Community-based organisation	11.4	10.0	0.0	6.8	8.3
	Private/commercial	1.0	4.0	1.0	6.8	3.0
	Other e.g. UN agency	0.0	0.5	1.0	0	0.3
	Total	100.0	100	100	100	100
Location	Rural	21.8	7.0	29.0	25.2	18.7
	Urban	78.2	93.0	71.0	74.8	81.3
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Overall, the NGO sector employed the highest number of social workers. This was especially true for Uganda (70.5%) and Kenya (54.5%). Conversely, 71% of social workers in Tanzania and 55.3% in Rwanda were employed in government agencies. The patterns of employment are most likely dictated by the national development policies, particularly with regard to community development and social protection for the most vulnerable groups. In Uganda, while the government provides the overall policy environment, most interventions are implemented in partnership with or solely by the non-government sector. For example, the National Orphans and Vulnerable Children Policy (Government of Uganda, 2004) explicitly relegates direct implementation of interventions for orphans and vulnerable children to NGOs. Conversely, the patterns of employment may be related to the extent of the privatisation processes – both current and historical – of the four countries, with Tanzania and Rwanda relatively less privatised than Uganda and Kenya.

In terms of location, 81.3% of organisations employing social workers were based in an urban or peri-urban area. Tanzania had the highest percentage (29%) of agencies located in rural areas; while Uganda had the lowest percentage (7%). Given the fact that the highest proportion of the populations in all countries in East Africa resides in rural areas and they (rural residents) also make up the majority of the poor, the greatest need for social workers' contribution to social development is in the rural areas. Community-based interventions in the rural areas have been documented to have sustainable benefits for the rural poor in terms of poverty reduction and the general welfare of the population (Midgley and Conley, 2010) and hence, social workers could contribute more meaningfully if they operated amongst the most vulnerable rural populations. The factors influencing social workers' preference for urban areas are linked to access to social and economic amenities in the urban areas and the underdevelopment of the rural areas. It should nonetheless be

noted that most of the agencies found in urban areas in all four countries serve a large clientele from rural areas. This yields 'the village in the city/town', and is particularly evident in most spontaneous settlements and slum areas.

Besides the location of agencies, the study also explored the target groups, the dominant level of intervention as well as the specific practice methods. Social work interventions can be at the micro (individual, family), mezzo (group, community) or macro (societal or national) levels. The approaches to interventions are usually described in terms of remedial or developmental social work but in some cases, the practice can have both of these aspects especially with regard to community-based practice in post-conflict situations (Spitzer and Twikirize, 2013) and HIV/AIDS work (Ankrah, 1992). Whereas most practitioners in all the four countries indicated that interventions are mostly community-based, variations emerged with regard to the description of the predominant approach in terms of developmental or remedial interventions as well as the specific methods adopted. The results are indicated in Table 14.3.

Table 14.3: Major target population, level of intervention and practice methods

Variable	Response	Country (%)				East Africa
		Kenya	Uganda	Tanzania	Rwanda	
Major target group	Children	49.0	32.1	11.0	11.7	26.0
	Youth	14.9	16.4	4.0	16.5	13.0
	Adults	35.1	23.6	5.0	26.2	22.5
	Elderly	1.0	1.4	1.0	1.0	1.0
	All categories	0.0	26.4	79.0	44.7	37.5
	Total	100	100	100	100	100
Level of intervention	Individual/family	26.7	17.5	38	21.4	25.9
	Community	56.9	66.5	33	47.6	51.0
	National	16.3	16	29	27.2	22.1
	Not stated	0	0	0	3.9	1.0
	Total	100	100	100	100	100
Description of practice	Developmental social work	52	56	18.0	29.1	32.7
	Remedial/correctional	29.7	26	56	29.1	43.8
	Generalist	17.8	16.5	23	23.3	19.2
	Other	0.5	1.5	1	7.8	2.0
	Not stated	0	0	2	10.7	2.3
	Total	100	100	100	100	100
Type of social work method used in practice	Individual casework	47.0	21.0	68.0	33.0	39.5
	Group work	9.9	19.0	3.0	11.7	12.1
	Community organisation	14.9	32.5	10.0	21.4	21.0
	Social development (broader/societal)	15.3	17.0	7.0	17.5	14.9
	Social action	2.5	3.5	3.0	3.9	3.1
	Social welfare administration	8.9	3.5	4.0	4.9	5.6
	Social work research	1.0	3.5	3.0	2.9	2.5
	Not stated	0.5	0.0	2.0	4.9	1.3
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Variable	Response	Country (%)				
		Kenya	Uganda	Tanzania	Rwanda	East Africa
Bulk of the organisation's work	Direct service delivery	61.9	66.5	74.0	34.0	60.7
	Policy development	2.5	4.0	3.0	11.7	4.6
	Advocacy	14.4	15.0	7.0	12.6	13.1
	Social welfare administration	18.8	7.5	14.0	20.4	14.5
	Other	1.5	7.0	2.0	5.8	4.1
	Not stated	1.0			15.5	3.0
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Two significant findings with regard to the major target population emerged. First is the focus of most interventions on whole populations irrespective of age in Tanzania (79%) and Rwanda (44.7%); while in Kenya and Uganda children were the most targeted (49% and 32%, respectively). The second critical finding is that there were extremely limited interventions specifically targeting the elderly in all the four countries (1%). This limited focus on the elderly is also reflected in the literature (cf. Spitzer and Mabeyo, 2011). The Uganda NGO online directory¹ lists only 7 out of 2021 organisations as targeting the elderly. Children, women and the elderly constitute the most vulnerable groups in society. Within the context of HIV/AIDS, it is not uncommon for the elderly to suffer a double jeopardy where, after losing their children, they have to take care of their grandchildren using their meagre resources and at a time when they are least productive and without formal social protection (Spitzer and Mabeyo, 2011). While organisations may design community-level interventions that target whole populations, the elderly may seldom benefit from such interventions due to various constraints, including their waning strength and the declining ability to engage meaningfully in community-level projects. All the four countries have lately initiated social assistance programmes for the elderly which, when scaled up, are hoped to bridge these gaps (Government of Uganda, 2012; Republic of Kenya, 2012; Republic of Rwanda, 2011; United Republic of Tanzania, 2008). Social workers need to advocate a faster scale-up of such programmes in order to improve the welfare of the elderly and their households.

Social work practice in Kenya and Uganda occurred mainly at community levels (Uganda, 66%; Kenya, 57%), and in both countries, practitioners mostly described their interventions as developmental. Conversely, the predominant level of intervention in Tanzania was at the individual/family level (38%) and a significant percentage of practitioners (56%) described their practice as remedial. Although in Rwanda there were relatively higher interventions at community level (47.6%), there was no correspondingly high perception of the practice as developmental social work. This is because the practitioners may not interpret what they personally do on a day-to-day basis as developmental. Both developmental and remedial approaches comprise crucial aspects of social work, although for Africa, due to the widespread poverty and vulnerability,

¹ <http://www.ugandangodirectory.org/> [accessed 13 April 2014].

developmental practice strategies have been long advocated (cf. Midgley, 1981; Midgley, 1995; Mupedziswa, 2001; Midgley and Conley, 2010; Butterfield and Abye, 2013).

Interestingly, while Kenya and Uganda shared community-based practice as the main strategy, differences emerged over the predominant methods used. In Kenya, individual casework was more predominant (47%), while in Uganda, community organisation was the most predominant (32.5%). This further reveals the dynamics of the integrated nature of social work practice in the region and signals the need for training institutions to strengthen the focus on integrated social work intervention skills. In Tanzania, consistent with the individual/family focus, casework was significantly predominant (68%). Similarly, a third of the practitioners in Rwanda said they used individual casework as the main method of intervention.

Most agencies in the region were engaged in direct service delivery at the micro and mezzo levels (60.7%). Rwanda had a relatively higher proportion of social workers engaged in social welfare administration (20%) and policy development (11%). Uganda (15%) and Kenya (14.4%) indicated a relatively higher engagement in advocacy work compared to Rwanda (12.6%) and Tanzania (7.0%). On the whole, there is paucity of macro level intervention in all the four countries (including social welfare administration, research, advocacy and policy development). From a social development perspective, broader, national-level interventions at planning and policy levels are necessary to design and implement relevant sustainable programmes with impacts on large sections of the population. Social workers' minimal involvement in planning and policy development has been blamed for their relatively less recognised impacts on society since they have to continuously deal with problems emanating from institutions and processes over which they exert little control (Mupedziswa, 2001; Twikirize *et al.*, 2013).

Social workers' contribution to poverty reduction and achievement of the MDGs

Across the region, poverty in its different facets remains the outstanding problem among social work clients, which in turn intensifies their vulnerability to other problems, including child care challenges, sickness and marital distress. The social work practitioners' estimate of poverty among their clientele is presented in Table 14.4.

Table 14.4: Estimate of poverty prevalence among social work clientele

		Country (%)				
Aspect	Response	Kenya	Uganda	Tanzania	Rwanda	Total
Estimate of poverty prevalence among client population	Low	3.0	2.0	2.0	1.9	2.3
	Moderate	17.3	11.5	9.0	34.0	16.9
	High	60.4	43.0	60.0	45.6	52.1
	Very high	18.8	43.5	29.0	14.6	27.9
	Not stated	0.5			3.9	0.8
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

More than a half (52.1%) of the practitioners estimated the prevalence of poverty among the clientele as high, with another 28% viewing it as very high.² This underscores the importance of developmental social work roles and interventions in the region. The fact that most social workers are employed in multidisciplinary settings notwithstanding, it is crucial for them to be adequately prepared to address poverty as part of their primary mandates. This will increase the relevance of the profession to the local needs.

A related finding refers to the extent of knowledge of the MDGs. While one would expect universal awareness of these goals among social workers, given their important place in the global development framework and the fact that it is now more than a decade since the MDGs were launched, not all practitioners were aware of MDGs as indicated in Table 14.5.

Table 14.5: Level of awareness of MDGs among social work practitioners

		Country (%)				
Question	Response	Kenya	Uganda	Tanzania	Rwanda	Total
Aware of MDGs	No, I am not.	5.0	5.0	4.0	4.9	4.8
	I am slightly aware of them.	27.2	22.0	36.0	14.6	24.8
	I am aware of them.	56.4	45.5	53.0	48.5	50.9
	I know them in detail.	10.9	27.5	7.0	31.1	19.2
	Not stated.	0.5			1.0	0.3
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Between 45% and to 56% of practitioners were aware of MDGs while only 19% said they knew them in great detail. Another 5% had never heard of them. A remark by a District Social Welfare Officer in Tanzania demonstrates the moderate level of knowledge and appreciation of the Millennium Development Goals:

In fact I myself just hear about these goals but do not understand them in detail. I think the government has succeeded very little in achieving these goals because some of us who are key stakeholders in fighting poverty do not know them quite well.

The inadequate knowledge of MDGs may have implications on the extent to which social workers access and make use of development literature that could potentially enrich their working knowledge of effective interventions. Interestingly the social work curricula in the region were perceived by a majority (89.3%) of educators as appropriately addressing the development needs of the respective countries, including the MDGs. Hence, the gap in knowledge may be interpreted from a conceptual and not a practice level on the part of the social work practitioners. And yet, this limited awareness of national and international development frameworks can limit social workers' engagement in policy and advocacy.

Their level of knowledge of the MDGs framework notwithstanding, social workers contribute to the achievement of these goals within their broad agency foci and interventions. Their specific contribution can be understood from the major areas of

² These perceptions correspond with the latest Human Development Index, featuring the East African countries as having a "low human development" with the following ranks (out of 186 countries): Kenya 145; Tanzania 152; Uganda 161; Rwanda 167 (UNDP, 2013).

intervention of the organisations in which they are employed. In this regard, the findings indicated that all MDGs received some attention. Table 14.6 shows the self-reported level of contribution to particular MDGs by social work agencies.

Table 14.6: Level of contribution of agencies to MDGs

MDGs theme	Response	Country %				
		Kenya	Uganda	Tanzania	Rwanda	Total
Poverty	High extent	58.0	45.0	11.4	22.2	42.1
	Partly	33.0	40.0	40.0	59.3	40.0
	Not at all	9.0	15.0	48.6	14.8	17.5
Education	High extent	62.8	36.4	25.7	14.8	40.4
	Partly	19.2	38.6	45.7	37.0	33.9
	Not at all	17.9	25.0	25.7	22.2	22.9
Health*	High extent	65.4	57.9	11.4	51.9	53.6
	Partly	21.8	27.9	37.1	44.4	28.9
	Not at all	12.8	14.3	45.7	3.7	16.8
Gender equality	High extent	44.9	53.6	5.7	14.8	41.4
	Partly	23.1	35.0	28.6	66.7	33.9
	Not at all	32.1	11.4	65.7	18.5	24.6
Environmental protection	High extent	29.5	27.9	8.6	11.1	24.3
	Partly	30.8	39.3	14.3	70.4	36.8
	Not at all	39.7	32.9	77.1	18.5	38.9
Global partnerships	High extent	73.1	57.1	5.7	0.0	49.6
	Partly	7.7	35.0	14.3	96.3	30.7
	Not at all	19.2	7.9	80.0	3.7	19.6

* The health-related MDGs include improving maternal and child health, and combating HIV/AIDS and other diseases.

The three most prominent MDGs to which organisations reported contributing to a high extent included health-related goals (53.6%), building global partnerships for development (49.6%) and poverty reduction (42.1%). The lowest contribution was recorded in environmental protection (24.3%). The specific perceived levels of contribution per goal varied between countries, with agencies in Tanzania generally rating their contribution to the achievement of all MDGs as low, while their counterparts in Kenya generally rated their contribution as high. The contribution to gender equality was mostly rated as high in Uganda (53.6%), with the lowest rating in Tanzania (5.7%). While Rwanda's performance in achieving gender equality is praised at an international level (the country even won the African Gender Award in 2007), it is surprising that the contribution of social workers towards this process seems to be rather meagre, with only 14.8% of respondents assessing their efforts as being "high".

It is significant to note the pattern in the perceived higher contribution to poverty reduction in Kenya (58%) and Uganda (45%) on the one hand, and Tanzania (11.4%) and Rwanda (22.2%) on the other. This pattern, in some way, relates to the differences in the levels of intervention and social work methods, with the former two countries reporting a

largely community development approach and the latter being more casework-oriented. It should, however, be noted that this study did not adopt a rigorous assessment of all agency activities to be able to corroborate the individual respondents' perceptions. Sometimes the differences in the perceived contribution to poverty and other MDGs may be based on how one interprets their work rather than the actual value of the work.

There was also a general perception of social work's role by key stakeholders at agency and national levels as mainly remedial and peripheral and, therefore, less capable of making significant contributions to development. This was specifically noted in Tanzania where policy makers associated social workers with casework as opposed to making contributions to broader societal goals.

Social workers receive poor clients so there is no way they can contribute to this [MDGs].

(Policy level respondent, Tanzania)

Whilst the respondent's opinion underestimates the contribution of social workers towards development by virtue of the fact that the clients they deal with are at the periphery, working with the poor and disadvantaged to restore and enhance their full function is in essence a direct contribution to the realisation of MDGs since it addresses poverty and social exclusion. A remark by a social work employer from Rwanda reiterated the gaps in social workers' contribution to poverty and achievement of the MDGs based on their limited engagement at the macro level.

Social workers should actively engage in policy-making and strategic development processes, conduct research to inform and enhance evidence-based advocacy as pro-poor agents at all levels. (Social work employer, Rwanda)

Respondents also pointed out other constraints to social work's contribution to poverty reduction, achievement of MDGs and generally social development. These included limited resource allocation to social welfare departments; communication barriers between social workers and the communities they serve; as well as conflicting cultural norms and values.

I cannot have total involvement without adequate facilitation. (Social worker, Uganda)

There are also communication barriers between social workers and community members...

At times there are cultural conflicts with agency programmes. (Social worker, Kenya)

Other limitations included inadequate practical skills linked to a rather theoretical orientation of training; a limited number of social workers deployed to work at the community level; an attendant underestimation of the profession by key stakeholders, including the respective governments; as well as corruption and misappropriation of resources at all levels of governance. In spite of these limitations, social workers continue to play varied and significant roles at the micro, mezzo and macro levels geared towards improving the well-being and functioning of individuals.

Individual roles played by social workers

Social workers were playing various roles ranging from community organisation to counselling, administration and, to a little extent, policy-related advocacy. The prominence of these roles varied significantly between the four countries. Social work practitioners'

perceptions of these roles in terms of development were also investigated. The findings are shown in Table 14.7.

Table 14.7: Social work practitioners' roles and responsibilities

	Country (%)				Total (%)
	Kenya	Uganda	Tanzania	Rwanda	
Individual roles					
Policy development and planning	4.5	2.0	3.0	8.7	4.1
Administration of programmes	16.3	20.0	15.0	11.7	16.5
Programme evaluation	3.0	4.5	3.0	4.9	3.8
Community organisation	29.2	39.5	12.0	17.5	27.8
Educator/trainer	5.4	10.0	14.0	19.4	10.7
Advocacy	4.0	2.5	6.0	8.7	4.6
Broker	5.0	2.5	15.0	4.9	5.8
Counselling/individual casework	31.7	15.0	30.0	8.7	22.0
Social work research	1.0	2.0	2.0	1.0	1.5
Other	0.0	2.0	0.0	4.9	1.5
Not stated	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.7	1.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
How would you describe the purpose of your day-to-day work?					
Addressing the immediate needs of clients	34.7	17.0	53.1	23.7	30.0
Preventing clients from falling into undesirable situations	9.9	16.0	11.2	26.9	14.8
Making changes in clients' lives for long-term improvement	55.4	63.5	33.7	48.4	53.5
Other		3.5	2.0	1.1	1.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

In Kenya, the majority of social workers defined their roles as counselling and/or casework (32%) and community organisation (29%). In Uganda, close to 40% were involved in community organisation, followed by programme administration (20%), with only 15% involved in individual casework. Counselling was also the most predominant role in Tanzania (30%), followed by brokering and programme administration (15%). Whilst the roles of a broker, trainer and counsellor can as well be played within the realm of community development, they are mostly associated with individual and family level interventions. There was not much differentiation of roles in Rwanda although the majority of practitioners perceived themselves as educators (19%) and community organisers (17.5%). Interestingly, with the exception of Tanzania where more than 53% of the social workers perceived their day-to-day work as remedial, a significant majority of their counterparts in Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda interpreted their roles as developmental and promotive irrespective of their individual or community level orientations. What is also evident from the four countries is the relative under-representation of research (1.5%), advocacy (4.6%) and policy development (4.1%) among the social work roles. In addition, whereas there was some involvement in programme administration (16.5%), very few social workers were engaged in programme evaluation in all the countries (3.8%).

Qualitative data further expounded on the roles of social workers in poverty reduction as involving promotion of income-generating activities at the community level; linking households and groups to credit services; facilitation of small enterprise development; direct support for education of children; linking youth to vocational skills training; and awareness creation regarding access to available services, including health care. Others included management of cash transfers to orphans and vulnerable children and the elderly, albeit to a little extent; coordination of government-initiated development programmes, including those promoting agricultural productivity through smallholder farmer groups and advisory services; linking communities to external resources through project proposal development; and strengthening mutual support structures such as village saving groups.

Generally, social work roles and tasks are multifaceted and are mainly occurring at the individual and community levels. This is positive since poverty is experienced at these levels. Nevertheless, in order to address the structural causes of poverty and deprivation, these roles need to be augmented with a more direct social work engagement at the macro level in order to strengthen the developmental perspective of social work in East Africa.

Culturally relevant practice

Culture is an important aspect of social work practice (Bettmann *et al.*, 2009; Rankopo and Osei-Hwedie, 2011; Spitzer and Twikirize, 2014). Cultural relevance in social work refers to the integration of the specific values, traditions and beliefs of a society into the intervention methods and social work theories applied in practice (Osei-Hwedie and Rankopo, 2007, cited in Bettmann *et al.*, 2009, 90). Spitzer and Twikirize (2014) contend that locally relevant cultural practices, indigenous knowledge systems and African ethical concepts are very important elements for the success of any social work intervention. Social workers need to acquire and develop competencies to work in diverse cultural settings and offer culturally appropriate practice, taking into account the fundamental professional ethics and values. Practitioners revealed that the most common cultural issues they dealt with related to gender; the definition and role of children; child care practices, especially adoption and foster care; marriage issues, particularly polygamy vis-à-vis household poverty; taboos about sexual and reproductive health and rights; and the role of modern and traditional religious beliefs in problem assessment, healing and problem-solving vis-à-vis contemporary forms of helping. Others include cultural identity as well as contradictions and resistance to change amongst some communities and groups. Social workers evaluated the adequacy of their education and training in preparing them for work in diverse cultural settings. Table 14.8 shows the findings.

Table 14.8: Extent to which practitioners were trained for culturally relevant social work practice

		Country %				
Aspect	Response	Kenya	Uganda	Tanzania	Rwanda	Total
Extent to which social work education and training prepared you to work in diverse cultural settings	Not at all	0.5	3.2	1.0	3.3	1.8
	To a slight extent	19.3	31.2	30.0	27.2	26.0
	Sufficiently	57.4	36.3	48.0	48.9	48.3
	To a great extent	22.8	29.3	21.0	20.7	24.0
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The proportion of social workers who felt that the training was just sufficient was comparably higher in Kenya (57.4%), followed by Rwanda (49%) and Tanzania (48%) and lowest in Uganda (36.3%). A sizeable proportion of practitioners, particularly in Uganda and Tanzania, felt that the training slightly prepared them for culturally relevant social work practice. Given the importance of culture and the indigenisation debate in social work, there is a need for social work training institutions to strengthen aspects of cultural competence as a core outcome in the curriculum.

Conversely, more than a half of all practitioners in the respective countries positively perceived the adopted models of social work as largely compatible with cultural values and traditions. However, some (22.4%) felt the models were less compatible. Table 14.9 shows practitioners' perceptions in this regard.

Table 14.9: Practitioners' perceptions about the compatibility of social work models with cultural values and traditions

		Country (%)				
Aspect	Response	Kenya	Uganda	Tanzania	Rwanda	Total
Models of social work practice compatible with the cultural values and traditions	Not at all	3.5	3.2	3.0	1.1	2.9
	Less compatible	17.8	22.7	36.0	17.4	22.4
	Compatible	65.8	57.8	55.0	69.6	62.2
	Very compatible	12.9	16.2	6.0	12.0	12.4
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Relatively more practitioners in Tanzania (36%) and Uganda (22.7%) perceived the models of social work practice as less compatible compared to their counterparts in Kenya (17.8%) and Rwanda (17.4%). It would be disastrous for social work if the majority of practitioners regarded the theories and models they adopt as incompatible since their continued application would be questionable. Nonetheless, the sizeable percentage that echoed less compatibility cannot be ignored, particularly within the context of persistent calls for indigenisation. But these voices can also be read with regard to the tension between professional standards and ethical principles of the social work profession on the one hand and cultural values and practices that affect and violate human rights on the other (Healy, 2007; Spitzer and Twikirize, 2014). The practice of female genital mutilation in many parts of East Africa, the killing of albinos in Tanzania and the violation of sexual

minority rights in Uganda are just a few examples of the tension between human rights and cultural traditions.

Social workers' professional identity

Professional identity is important for reflection, motivation, continuous professional development, innovation and productivity. It is influenced by, among other factors, public recognition of the profession as well as the extent of association and networking amongst the professionals (Mupedziswa, 2001). National associations of social workers can play a crucial role in enhancing professional identity. Table 14.10 shows the awareness and membership in national associations as well as practitioners' views about public recognition of social work.

With the exception of Tanzania where there seemed to be universal awareness of the national association of social workers, all other countries had lower levels of awareness among the social work practitioners. For example, 68% of Kenyan social workers were not aware of the existence of a social work association. It is no wonder, therefore, that membership is minimal. Regionally, slightly more than a half (52.9%) of the respondents were aware of the presence of the respective association in their country, and only one-fifth (21.7%) were actual members of such an association. Tanzania's situation can be explained by the ongoing systematic efforts to strengthen the association through its partnership with the Washington DC National Association of Social Workers (NASW). The country has a functioning social workers' association which was established in 1981 and became officially registered in 1982. However, Tanzania's high levels of awareness and membership can be attributed to biases in the sampling where mostly members of the national association were conveniently selected during scheduled meetings of the association.

Table 14.10: Awareness of and membership in professional association and perceptions about the social work profession

Question	Response	Country (%)				Total
		Kenya	Uganda	Tanzania	Rwanda	
Aware of social work association in country	Yes	31.7	53.0	99.0	49.5	52.9
	No	68.3	47.0	1.0	46.6	46.4
	Not stated	-	-	-	3.9	0.7
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Member of national social work association	Yes	3.0	9.5	81.0	24.3	21.7
	No	97.0	84.0	18.0	71.8	75.4
	Not stated	-	6.5	1.0	3.9	3.0
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
View about public recognition of social work profession	SW is not recognised at all	8.4	12.0	13.0	20.4	12.4
	SW is fairly underestimated	53.5	57.5	68.0	54.4	57.4
	SW is adequately recognised	29.2	17.5	17.0	16.5	21.2
	SW is highly appreciated	8.9	13.0	2.0	3.9	8.3
	Not stated	-	-	-	4.9	0.8
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

In all four countries, the majority of social work practitioners shared the view that the profession is under-estimated (57.4%) or not recognised at all (12.4%). These views represent a broad picture of social work in East Africa where it still struggles to earn public and professional recognition (cf. Twikirize *et al.*, 2013). In one of the interviews in Uganda, a respondent exemplified this low perception about social work:

Tell me, what do social workers do that someone else cannot do...? (Policy level respondent, Uganda)

The perpetual challenge for social work is to assert itself as a distinct profession that plays critical roles in social development and the improvement of human welfare. Whilst social workers are not indispensable as actors, they bring unique knowledge and skills to the social development arena. It is on the basis of this demonstration of their viable contribution that arguments for more recognition, regulation and protection of the profession can be validated. To date, none of the East African countries has a legitimised statutory body to regulate social work, although some progress has been made in the past years. In Tanzania, first steps towards the development of a Social Work Council and Bill were made in 2012 (Mabeyo, 2013).

Social work education: Educators' and students' perspectives and experiences

In East Africa, social work education is offered through public (government), non-governmental (mostly religious-based) and commercial institutions. The majority of these institutions offer a bachelor's degree in social work. In Uganda, only two universities (Uganda Christian University and Kampala International University) have recently developed master's programmes in social work. In Tanzania, the Open University of Tanzania offers a Master of Arts in Social Work (MA SW), while Hubert Kairuki Memorial University offers a Master of Social Work (MSW) evening programme.³ There is also training at certificate and ordinary diploma levels, particularly by private commercial institutions. There are differences in the duration of the bachelor's programme, based on the general curriculum in each country. Whilst in Rwanda and Kenya a Bachelor of Social Work is a four-year programme, in Uganda and Tanzania it is a three-year programme. In our study, social work educators' qualifications and perceptions, as well as students' views and experiences were explored.

Social work educators' highest qualifications

The quality of education is determined by the curriculum, competent educators, delivery methods, resources and other facilities for a suitable learning environment. The study investigated some of these aspects. The qualifications of social work educators who responded to the survey in the selected institutions are presented in Table 14.11. It should be noted that the study did not collect comprehensive information on all educators in a particular school or department and, therefore, the information presented here refers only to educators who responded to the questionnaire in the selected institutions. While this

³ In 2014, there were plans to start another MSW programme at the Institute of Social Work in Dar es Salaam.

gives a fair picture of the qualifications of educators, it may not be totally representative due to the limited number of respondents in this category.

Table 14.11: Social work educators' highest qualifications

Variable	Response	Country (%)				Total
		Kenya	Uganda	Tanzania	Rwanda	
Highest qualification	Diploma in social work	10.5				3.6
	Bachelor's degree in social work (BSW)	31.6	16.7	44.4	40.0	30.4
	Master's degree in social work (MSW)	15.8	33.3	33.3	40.0	28.6
	PhD in social work	-	5.6		-	1.8
	Other*	42.1	44.4	22.2	20.0	35.7
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Where qualification was attained	National public institution	68.4	50.0	77.8	50.0	60.7
	National private institution	15.8	16.7	-	-	10.7
	Institution in another African country	5.3	16.7		50.0	16.1
	Institution outside Africa	10.5	16.7	22.2		12.5
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

* Other qualifications included sociology, gender studies, demography, social sciences, educational policy and planning, economics, public health, clinical psychology, environmental science, finance and strategic management and human resource management.

Whereas a sizeable proportion of educators in all four countries had a qualification related to social work, a few issues stand out. First, the concentration of highest qualifications at undergraduate degree level (3.6% diploma in social work and 30.4% BSW) and second, a relatively higher percentage of educators qualifying in disciplines other than social work at the post-graduate level. Further investigation of these findings revealed that most of those with a highest qualification in other disciplines had attained a degree in social work but qualified in other disciplines at master's or PhD level, particularly due to limited social work training opportunities at graduate and post-graduate levels in the region. Related to this is the notion that most students seek scholarships for graduate and post-graduate study and in some cases, they take hold of opportunities available in any related disciplines instead of waiting to get a specific scholarship in social work. The gaps in appropriate training among social work educators have been indicated in other studies in Africa (cf. Hochfeld *et al.*, 2009). These gaps have definite implications for the quality of social work education in the region. It is, therefore, crucial that standards for the recruitment of educators in schools of social work are set and strictly followed and that qualifications of the current educators are upgraded. An important outcome of the study contradicts the often lamented influence of Western training on social work educators in African contexts. The majority (71.4%) of educators in East Africa attained their highest qualification in their own country or in another African country (16.1), with only 12.5% having gone outside Africa to obtain a master's degree or PhD.

Social work curriculum, global standards and research

In our study, educators were invited to describe the current social work curriculum at their respective institutions. Other key aspects interrogated were the awareness of the global standards for the education and training of the social work profession, and engagement in research. Educators' views on these aspects are presented in Table 14.12.

Table 14.12: Description of the curriculum, global standards and engagement in research: Educators' perspectives

		Country (%)				
Question	Response	Kenya	Uganda	Tanzania	Rwanda	Total
Current social work curriculum can be mainly described as:	Generalist	52.6	72.2	100.0	70.0	69.6
	Social development	5.3	11.1	-	30.0	10.7
	Community development	36.8	5.6	-	-	14.3
	Social policy planning and administration	5.3	11.1	-	-	5.4
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Curriculum meets the global standards	I am not aware of the global standards	5.3	33.3	22.2	20.0	19.6
	They are not considered at all	-	-	-	10.0	1.8
	They are partly integrated	68.4	55.6	55.6	60.0	60.7
	They are fully met in our curriculum	26.3	11.1	22.2	10.0	17.9
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Extent to which social work staff engage in research	Not at all	21.1	27.8	22.2	10.0	21.4
	To a moderate extent	52.6	33.3	77.8	90.0	57.1
	To a high extent	26.3	27.8	-	-	17.9
	Not stated	-	11.1	-	-	3.6
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

There were slight variations across countries regarding the description of the social work curriculum. In Tanzania, all the educators described the curriculum as generalist while in Rwanda, besides a generalist perspective (70%), another 30% of the educators viewed the underlying approach as largely social development-oriented. Over a half of the educators in Kenya described the curriculum as generalist⁴ while another 37% described it as mostly community development. The generalist approach was also predominantly mentioned in Uganda (72%). These interpretations fairly reflect the social work practice orientation in the respective countries, implying some linkage between education and practice. For example, in Kenya and Uganda, social work practice was predominantly community development-oriented while in Tanzania it was mainly remedial. But on the whole, both social work education and practice is generalist.

⁴ Generalist approach as used in this chapter refers to the practice and pedagogy of social work that imparts "basic competences in multilevel, and multimethod approaches" (Mizrahi and Davis, 2011, 260) in a variety of practice settings, diverse client systems and an eclectic body of knowledge.

Social workers in generalist practice may occupy a variety of professional roles or positions within which they carry out certain service activities (Walsh, 2009). However, its adequacy in helping social workers to develop unique competencies that provide a competitive advantage over related disciplines has to be questioned. As noted by Walsh (2009, 3) “the complexity of generalist social work practice is sometimes underappreciated, because practitioners must know a lot about a lot of things”. Practitioners pointed to a lack of specialisation as sometimes limiting them in practice as many other professions are claiming the space. Some respondents reiterated the need to train social workers for specialist fields such as medical and psychiatric social work and palliative counselling since these areas require much more than generalist skills. The introduction of post-graduate social work programmes in the region can provide opportunities for specialisation and deepening of skills in particular fields.

Meeting the global standards

Social work education and training is supposed to be aligned to some standards set by the IASSW and IFSW (Sewpaul and Jones, 2004). These global standards were developed based on the assumption that there is a common core to social work at the global level and on an essential affirmation of humanity and human dignity of all people across the world (Sewpaul, 2005, 213). Within East Africa, only 17.9% of educators were of the opinion that these standards were fully met in their respective curricula, while 60.7% considered them as being partly integrated. On average, one-fifth (19.6%) of the educators admitted not being aware of them. Whilst it is understandable that social work institutions, particularly in developing countries, may not meet all the standards, at least there should be an awareness of these standards as a starting point to meeting them. A likely explanation for this gap in knowledge could lie in the earlier finding that a sizeable number of educators were not professional social workers and neither did they have basic training in social work. Furthermore, the findings point to the low level of engagement with advances in social work at the global level since participation in regional and global bodies and events is dismally low for East African academics.

Engagement in research

Another key component of social work training that was investigated is research. In all the four countries, a majority (57%) of educators admitted to only moderately engaging in research. This was particularly prominent in Rwanda (90%) and Tanzania (78%). In Kenya (26.3%) and Uganda (28%), less than a third of the interviewed educators described their engagement in research as high. The key message from these findings is low prioritisation and capacity for research in social work institutions in East Africa. Mupedziswa (2001) attributes this low engagement in research to limited availability of resources. The low research capacity results in limited academic output and the attendant overreliance on externally generated academic materials; and ultimately affects the quality of social work education in the region. At the policy level, it is impossible to engage, advocate, influence or develop relevant policies for social change without adequate ongoing local research.

Furthermore, students' engagement in research as well as the major themes addressed in their research projects was examined. The results are indicated in Table 14.13.

Table 14.13: Students' engagement in and orientation of research projects

	Country (%)				Total
	Kenya	Uganda	Tanzania	Rwanda	
Undertook research course/unit as part of social work curriculum					
Yes	86.5	91.5	100.0	97.4	92.2
No	13.5	8.5	-	2.6	7.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
What best describes the orientation of research problems?					
Individual behaviour problems	9.3	10.3	16.3	10.5	10.9
Problems of specific vulnerable groups	27.4	22.5	48.0	22.8	28.1
Community development issues	44.7	47.4	23.5	42.1	41.9
Policy and planning issues	1.4	4.7	3.1	22.8	6.6
Programme/project evaluation	5.1	5.6	8.2	0.9	5.0
Other	0.5	1.9	1.0	0.9	1.1
Not stated	11.6	7.5			6.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

In Kenya (44.7%), Uganda (47.4%) and Rwanda (42%), most student research projects focused on community development issues. Conversely, in Tanzania, the majority of students' projects (48%) focused on problems of specific vulnerable groups, consistent with the remedial focus in social work practice. It can thus be deduced from the findings that the research orientation is aligned to the predominant practice areas in the respective countries. This is positive in preparing students for their future engagement in those practice areas. Conversely, these findings call for more development-oriented research activities in social work training since the community lies at the heart of African life.

Reference materials for teaching and learning

Social work education and its responsiveness to the local problems and needs are partly influenced by the type of teaching and learning materials. The theories, models and content in the materials quite often reflect the context in which they were developed as well as the social, economic and political experiences of the authors. Whilst "social workers need an understanding of the profession as it exists in various parts of the world" (Healy and Link, 2012, 5), the danger lies in the predominance of the knowledge of other contexts over the local environment. For social work education to be relevant to Africa's realities, the materials used in teaching and learning should as much as possible be locally generated. This is also part of the process of knowledge generation and is greatly influenced by the level of scientific research and publications. As indicated in the previous section, engagement in research is still moderate among the social work scholars in East Africa. It is, therefore, not surprising that there is an obvious over-reliance on education materials produced outside Africa as indicated in educators' and students' responses. Table 14.14 shows the level of use of materials from different sources.

Table 14.14: Source of teaching and reference materials – educators’ and students’ responses

Materials used – educators’ responses (N=56)	Level of use	Country (%)				Total
		Kenya	Uganda	Tanzania	Rwanda	
Country-specific materials	Low	26.3	33.3	55.6	30.0	33.9
	Moderate	52.6	27.8	33.3	60.0	42.9
	High	21.1	38.9	11.1	10.0	23.2
Materials from other African countries	Low	31.6	22.2	44.4	20.0	28.6
	Moderate	63.2	66.7	33.3	60.0	58.9
	High	5.3	11.1	22.2	20.0	12.5
Materials produced outside of Africa	Low	15.8	22.2	-	-	12.5
	Moderate	36.8	16.7	11.1	30.0	25.0
	High	47.4	61.1	88.9	70.0	62.5
Reference materials – students’ responses (N=641)	Source/ type	Kenya	Uganda	Tanzania	Rwanda	Total
	Local publications	17.2	16.9	3.1	8.8	13.4
	Textbooks from other African countries	13.5	7.0	7.1	0.9	8.1
	Textbooks from Europe, North America and other Western countries	67.9	68.5	85.7	79.8	73.0
	Other	-	7.5	4.1	10.5	5.0
	Not answered	1.4	-	-	-	0.5
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

In all four countries, educators reported a substantially high level of reliance on materials produced in Europe and other Western countries, with the overall average of 62.5%. This is compared to the moderate use of in-country (42.9%) and African-based materials (58.9%), with only 23.2% of educators reporting high reliance on in-country and 12.5% on other African-based materials. Given the fact that very few social work books and scientific articles originate from Africa, it is very likely that these indigenous sources come from other scientific disciplines. The over-reliance on materials produced outside Africa was also evident in students’ responses (73%), underscoring gaps in indigenisation and/or contextualisation of social work education in the region.

Students’ fieldwork experiences

The study investigated students’ experiences and perceptions regarding fieldwork. This aspect was considered important in profiling the nature of social work education in East Africa and its potential for imparting skills and competences for developmental social work practice.

The findings confirmed that fieldwork is universally adopted as a key component of social work education in East Africa. However, there were some gaps at individual student level. Close to 10% of students in Kenya, and 8.5% in Uganda had not done fieldwork. In Uganda, all such students were from private commercial institutions who attributed the pattern to the costs involved in implementing fieldwork. Table 14.15 shows the fieldwork patterns by agency category, practice orientation and locality.

Table 14.15: Field placements by agency category, practice orientation and locality

Variable	Response	Country (%)				Total
		Kenya	Uganda	Tanzania	Rwanda	
Type of agencies where fieldwork was done	Government department	23.3	32.4	60.2	31.6	33.4
	Non-governmental organisation (NGO)	59.5	51.2	35.7	62.3	53.6
	Community-based organisation (CBO)	10.2	5.2	2.0	3.5	6.1
	Private-for profit agency	0.5	1.4	-	2.6	1.1
	Not answered	6.5	9.9	2.0	-	5.8
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Nature of services during fieldwork	Remedial, e.g. probation	13.0	15.0	39.8	8.8	17.0
	Group work	13.0	15.5	11.2	10.5	13.1
	Community-based services	55.3	52.6	33.7	59.6	51.9
	Advocacy services	7.0	5.6	12.2	20.2	9.7
	Other	4.2	0.5	2.0	0.9	2.0
	Not answered	7.4	10.8	1.0	-	6.3
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Locality where most fieldwork was done	Rural setting	28.4	53.5	24.5	69.3	43.4
	Urban setting	65.1	35.2	72.4	30.7	50.2
	Not answered	6.5	11.3	3.1	-	6.4
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Generally, NGOs offered the most placements (53.6%) with the highest percentage in Rwanda (62.3%) and the lowest in Tanzania where government offered the most placements (60%). The pattern in students' placements is comparable to practitioners' employment patterns, except in Rwanda where, in spite of the government being the major employer of social workers, a significant majority of students had their fieldwork in NGOs. The discrepancy could mean likely gaps in competent supervision during fieldwork. Respective social work institutions can improve this balance by placing students in organisations likely to employ most social workers in order to tap their resources as supervisors.

In terms of the nature of practice, community-based services dominated the orientation of fieldwork in all countries apart from Tanzania where remedial services were more prominent (39.8%). The pattern is again consistent with practitioners' employment patterns as earlier indicated in this chapter. With regard to locality, the majority of students in Rwanda (69.3%) and Uganda (53.5%) had placements in rural areas while in Kenya (65.1%) and Tanzania (72.4%) most placements were in urban areas. As will be shown in the subsequent section, this is, to some extent, related to students' employment aspirations. Conversely, many students preferred doing fieldwork near their academic institutions which are in urban areas since, in some cases, fieldwork runs concurrently with other course units. In Kenya, for example, third year students have block fieldwork while fourth year students have concurrent fieldwork that runs alongside lecture room instruction.

Students' employment aspirations by practice orientation and locality

Whilst both the rural and urban areas in East Africa present unique social problems that require social work interventions, the greatest majority of vulnerable populations live in the rural areas. Similarly, a developmental perspective in social work requires that more focus is put on the community and policy level interventions including political advocacy while not neglecting services of an individual, clinical nature. Social work students' employment aspirations were investigated with regard to the preferred locality and the nature of practice in terms of clinical, community work, policy advocacy and planning, social welfare administration and social research. The results are indicated in Table 14.16.

Table 14.16: Students' employment aspirations by practice area and locality

Variable	Response	Country (%)				Total
		Kenya	Uganda	Tanzania	Rwanda	
Nature of practice	Clinical/individual casework	12.6	6.6	10.2	14.0	10.5
	Community work	46.0	28.6	28.6	35.1	35.6
	Policy advocacy and planning	13.0	11.3	16.3	37.7	17.3
	Social administration	19.5	44.6	26.5	5.3	26.4
	Social research	8.4	8.5	16.3	6.1	9.2
	Other	-	0.4	-	-	0.2
	Not stated	0.5	-	2.0	1.8	0.8
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Locality to seek employment	Rural	19.5	34.3	15.3	27.2	25.2
	Urban	23.7	27.2	31.6	21.9	25.8
	Either of the two	56.7	38.5	53.1	50.9	49.1
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

In terms of practice, community work had the highest percentage of aspirants (35.6%); while social research had the least (9.2%), with slight variations across countries. In Uganda, the majority of students aspired to work in social service administration (44.6%), followed by community work (28.6%), with the least percentage in clinical/individual casework (6.6%). The plausible explanation for this trend is the twin programme in social work and social administration offered in most universities in Uganda and the tendency that social administration appears to have been given more focus in the curriculum than direct social work, particularly clinical practice. Conversely, a significant majority of social work practitioners were engaged in direct social work practice at the community level with a very small proportion in administrative positions. In Kenya and Tanzania, the highest percentage of students (46% and 28.6%, respectively) wished to engage in community work while in Rwanda, the highest proportion aspired to be employed in advocacy (37.7%) and community work (35.1%), with the least percentage (5.3%) expressing interest in social service administration. Comparatively, Rwanda had a slightly higher percentage of students wishing to engage in clinical practice than their counterparts in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. With the psycho-social effects of the genocide still apparent in Rwanda, it is essential to emphasise clinical interventions alongside the more developmental approaches in social work. This is also necessary in all contexts and countries in East Africa given the

psychological effects of war and post-conflict situations in this Great Lakes region (Spitzer and Twikirize, 2014). Hence, social work education in East Africa needs to be careful not to undermine casework in a bid to adopt a social development approach.

With regard to the preferred locality for employment, more students expressed a readiness to work in either urban or rural areas in all the four countries. Tanzania (15.3%) had the lowest percentage of students wishing to work in a rural area while Uganda (34.3%) had the highest. For a long time, graduates of higher education have been reluctant to seek employment in rural areas due to the hard-to-reach nature of such areas and the limited coverage of social services and amenities for a decent lifestyle. This has resulted in a spiral of deprivation and stagnation of the quantity and quality of services in these areas – consequently perpetuating underdevelopment. With recent increases in unemployment, graduates are more willing to seek employment wherever it is available. In some countries such as Uganda, there has also been a policy shift in recruitment in the lower local governments with most agencies and government departments requiring a minimum qualification of a bachelor's degree for a supervisory or managerial job. If rural employment for social workers can be actualised, it will go a long way in enhancing the contribution of social work to social development in East Africa as well as reducing inequalities in access to services between the rural and the urban populations.

Role of social work in promoting gender equality

The link between gender, poverty and social development is widely recognised and documented (cf. World Bank, 2012). Due to its cross-cutting nature, promoting gender equality requires a multi-sectorial and multidisciplinary approach. Social work is underscored by human rights principles with a strong emphasis on the dignity and worth of every individual. Hence, social workers should never relegate their responsibility to actively engage in promoting gender equality. In view of this, gender issues in social work practice and training constituted key research questions in this study. Findings revealed a good conceptualisation of gender and gender inequality among social work practitioners and employers. This is attributable to decades of the gender equality movement at the international and regional levels. In addition, the strong relationship between gender inequality and social development was appreciated. Respondents mainly attributed the slow progress in achieving gender equality to repressive cultures, citing bride price, polygamy, female genital mutilation and generally patriarchy as aspects of culture that perpetuate gender inequality. A response by one of the key informants from Uganda reiterates the influence of culture on gender inequality:

When you critically look at gender issues, they are basically a design or a result of the different cultural setups, and therefore, interventions that are to promote equality between men and women have got to target the culture in most of the communities because the cultures play a big role in either increasing or reducing the gender gap. (Key informant, Uganda)

A key role in the promotion of gender equality is to address these negative elements of culture and to engage in a dialogue with members of the grassroots communities to overcome gender stereotyping and appreciate the need to transform the negative elements

of such cultures. Study respondents emphasised that there is a need to clarify the concept of gender as not equivalent to women's issues or women taking over the positions and roles of men. It was argued that within the region, the resistance to the gender equality movement has partly been due to such misconceptions and that unless these are addressed, the gains in gender equality will take long to be realised. Social work practitioners also have to be intent on increasing the involvement of men in all interventions and strategies aiming to promote gender equality.

There was consensus on the significant role of social work in promoting gender equality. The contention by several policy makers was that most of social work clients are women and children who are deprived of their rights (Mabeyo, Ndung'u and Riedl, 2014, 109). Social workers need to not only address their practical needs such as basic health care, education and incomes but also help in advocating their strategic positions in relation to men so that no single category of gender is disadvantaged in any community. In order to effectively play these roles, social workers need to overcome their own prejudices, be equipped with appropriate skills and knowledge and be ready and willing to work in multidisciplinary teams. They also have to consciously mainstream gender in all levels of intervention. Table 14.17 shows practitioners' responses regarding the extent of integration of gender issues in practice and the adequacy of the social work training in preparing them to address these issues.

Table 14.17: Extent to which gender is mainstreamed in social work interventions and practitioners' perceptions about the adequacy of social work training in addressing gender issues

	Response	Country (%)				Total
		Kenya	Uganda	Tanzania	Rwanda	
Gender is mainstreamed in all my social work interventions (Practitioners; N=605)	Not at all	5.0	5.0	10.0	10.7	6.8
	Not sure	4.5	3.0	22.0	4.9	6.9
	Slight extent	31.2	26.0	46.0	17.5	29.6
	Great extent	59.4	66.0	21.0	58.3	55.0
	Not stated	0.0	0.0	1.0	8.7	1.7
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Social work training helped me to appreciate and integrate gender in practice (Practitioners; N=605)	Not at all	1.0	0.0	4.0	6.8	2.1
	Very slightly	3.0	5.0	7.0	3.9	4.5
	Slightly	12.9	7.0	26.0	19.4	14.2
	Adequately	30.2	18.5	30.0	31.1	26.4
	Very adequately	53.0	32.5	32.0	34.0	39.5
	Not stated	0.0	37.0	1.0	4.9	13.2
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

	Response	Country (%)				Total
		Kenya	Uganda	Tanzania	Rwanda	
Gender issues were adequately covered in the curriculum (Students; N=641)	Strongly disagree	1.4	1.9	0.0	0.0	1.1
	Disagree	1.9	4.7	5.1		3.0
	Not sure	0.5	6.1	3.1	1.8	3.0
	Agree	48.8	49.3	45.9	41.2	47.2
	Strongly agree	47.4	38.0	44.9	57.0	45.6
	Not stated	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.2
	Total	100	100	100	100	100

The majority of social work practitioners in the region (55%) asserted that they mainstream gender in their interventions to a great extent although with some variations between countries. The highest percentage of practitioners with such a view were in Uganda (66%), while the lowest percentage was in Tanzania (21%) where the majority of practitioners rated their gender mainstreaming efforts as slight. There is another category of practitioners who admitted either to not at all mainstream gender (6.8%) or were not sure they did (6.9%). This may be due to limited conceptualisation of gender mainstreaming or outright lack of sensitivity to gender issues in development.

With regard to the adequacy of social work training in addressing gender issues, most – albeit less than a half – of the practitioners (39.5%) stated that the training was very adequate in preparing them to integrate gender issues in practice, while another 26.4% rated it as just adequate. When compared to the views of current students, the findings reveal slight improvements in the coverage of gender in the social work curriculum with 47.2% and 45.6% of students agreeing or strongly agreeing, respectively, that gender issues were adequately addressed in the curriculum. In Uganda and Rwanda's cases, there appears to be a mismatch between gender-related training and mainstreaming gender in practice with the latter more pronounced than the former. This implies that in these countries, whilst there is much focus on gender in practice, there are gaps insofar as preparing social work practitioners for gender sensitive interventions is concerned. Conversely, in Tanzania, there was a slightly higher percentage of practitioners who acknowledged the adequacy of the social work training with regard to gender, and yet a significant majority stated that they only slightly mainstreamed gender in their interventions. This reflects a mismatch between education and practice as far as gender issues are concerned.

Gaps in the actual contribution of social workers towards gender equality were also noted by study participants. For example, clients in Tanzania pointed out that social workers are mostly preoccupied with mediating to resolve marital conflicts but they are not actively involved in promoting women's economic empowerment which is a critical aspect in promoting gender equality.

In view of the above findings, there is a need to strengthen gender issues in the social work curriculum so that future social work practitioners are adequately equipped with skills and knowledge to contribute towards gender equality. A scrutiny of the social work curricula in the different institutions revealed that gender is not a major theme in

most undergraduate programmes. At Makerere University, for example, gender as an independent module is conspicuously missing in the curriculum with the argument that gender issues are cross-cutting, while at the Institute of Social Work in Tanzania, gender is offered as an optional course to social work students – implying that some social work students miss this core subject. It is, therefore, necessary to incorporate issues of gender and gender equality in the mainstream social work curricula in order to equip social workers with the skills and competences to address gender issues in practice.

Conclusion

Social work in East Africa exhibits common features as well as differences. Given the conditions of poverty and numerous other social problems, its relevance in the region is not questionable, the constant argument that it was imported into the region notwithstanding. Whilst the profession still carries features of a residual nature, there is a general consensus among practitioners, educators, students, clients and policy makers that a developmental social work model is the most appropriate to tackle issues of poverty and underdevelopment. This developmental focus is evident to varying degrees in the social work curricula in the respective countries.

Some differences emerge in social work practice areas among countries. Kenya and Uganda have relatively more shared aspects pertaining to the adoption of the social development model, especially with regard to orientation of social work towards community development. Tanzania is overtly oriented towards remedial social work, while Rwanda, whilst professing a developmental approach, has many practitioners perceiving what they do as remedial. Hence in Rwanda, there appears to be a mismatch between the preferred model of social work and the actual models adopted in practice. The strong linkage between practice models and the predominant employers in each country (government agencies in Tanzania and Rwanda and NGOs in Uganda and Kenya) point to the extent to which organisational culture impacts on social workers' innovation. In essence, the roles and contribution of social workers towards poverty reduction and achievement of social development are largely influenced by the philosophy and focus of the organisations within which they are employed. This is exacerbated by the fact that social workers in the region are grossly under-represented in key decision- and policy-making/influencing positions at the organisational and national levels as evidenced in the study findings.

The convergence of views of educators, students and practitioners regarding key aspects of social work education and practice, including the approaches, methods and skills and the adequacy of the curriculum, points to the need to strengthen synergistic relationships between training institutions, practitioners and policy makers in strengthening social work education and practice in the region.

Whilst generalist social work education has been widely adopted because of its inherent strengths in imparting skills for multiple practice settings, there is an emerging discomfort among practitioners regarding its ability to provide cutting edge specialist skills to social workers which would not be contested by other related professions that are currently competing for space and recognition alongside professional social workers. The

appropriate step would be to maintain generalist training at the undergraduate level but introduce areas of specialisation at graduate level training in line with the priority fields of practice in East Africa.

Another aspect of social work education that warrants attention relates to teaching and learning materials. Foreign generated materials of necessity cannot be dealt away with due to the universality of the social work profession and the benefit of cross-cultural learning. Nonetheless, systematic steps have to be taken to build capacity for research and publications at the local level in order to increase the availability and access to local scientific literature. There have to be means and ways of converting the practice knowledge and experiences into scientific knowledge that can be locally and universally shared and utilised. Relevant fieldwork placements, adequate supervision and assessment can additionally help to strengthen social work education for social development in East Africa.

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Social Work Perspectives in Poverty Reduction and Social Development in Kenya

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Introduction

Social work is a crucial stakeholder in the efforts for social development and poverty reduction in Kenya. Indicators in different development plans such as the First Medium Term Plan 2008 - 2012 (GoK, 2010a) and Second Medium Term Plan 2013 - 2017 (GoK, 2013), amongst other initiatives by different stakeholders, have over the years reflected the relevance of social work in social development and poverty reduction. Its role cannot be underestimated as the country undergoes different phases of reconstruction, particularly through the devolution process that is gradually being implemented as an outcome of the new constitution promulgated in 2010.

Social work adds value in the human improvement programmes encompassed in social development and poverty reduction initiatives. Such initiatives are designed for the well-being of the people with the intent to improve their livelihoods. In some situations however, the initiatives overlook the critical factor of how the resultant outcomes may affect the intended beneficiaries. Social work, therefore, intervenes with the view to ensuring that the process and outcomes of those initiatives are harmonious with the dignity of potential beneficiaries, respect their individual liberties and involve them in the efforts to shape their destiny. This is critical for the sustenance of the outcomes derived through implemented poverty reduction and social development initiatives.

This chapter exposes the various poverty reduction and social development initiatives undertaken primarily by the government of the Republic of Kenya in the recent past. It argues that social work, as an empowering profession, enables poor people to participate in development on equitable terms as well as creates opportunities for self-improvement. In addition, the Millennium Development Goals have been analysed as crucial facets for poverty reduction and social development in Kenya with a highlight on the role of social work therein. The chapter also presents a critical perspective on the relevance of the social work profession in social development and poverty reduction initiatives. It also presents some tangible suggestions for consideration by concerned stakeholders which, in the context of social work, have the potential to make the outcomes of interventions sustainable.

Interdependency between social work and social development

The principal focus of professional social work is to promote the well-being and quality of people's lives and, by extension, improve their livelihoods. This entails advocating for appropriate welfare measures within the legislative, policy and practice levels which are in line with the new global definition of social work by the IASSW (2014) and IFSW (2014):

Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance well-being.

Social work encompasses activities directed at improving human lives and alleviating human distress and social problems. It is a profession that places human development at the centre of its programmes. In so doing, social workers, as caring professionals, work with people to enhance their competence and functioning to access social support and other resources, to create humane and responsive social services, and to expand the social structures of society that provide opportunities for all citizens (DuBois and Miley, 2005). Thus, social work as a professional service follows the philosophy of holistic human development.

Social development, on the other hand, is a cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary field of practice that seeks to improve the social and material well-being of people regardless of their geographical locations (Estes, 1990). Stein (1976) describes social development as the process through which people are facilitated to realise the fullness of the social, political and economic potentials that already exist within them. Midgley (1995, 250) defines social development as a "process of planned change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole in conjunction with a dynamic process of economic development". Patel (2005, 30) views social development as "a people-centred approach to development that promotes citizen participation and strengthens the voice of the poor people in decision making and in building democratic and accountable institutions".

In the context of the foregoing definitions, social development and social work intersect at different points in the process of enhancing the well-being of humanity. The principal goal of social work includes enhancing people's capacity to more amicably deal with problems of living, cope and function effectively; linking clients with needed resources; improving the social service delivery networks; and promoting social justice through the development of social policy (DuBois and Miley, 2005). Similarly, the goal and substance of social development is the welfare of the people, as determined by the people themselves, meeting human needs at all levels and for improving the capacity of human relationship between people and social institutions (Paiva, 1977). The relationship between social work and social development is envisioned as reciprocal with the latter being viewed as developmental practice in social work (Midgley, 1995). Equally important is the fact that both social work and social development focus on meeting human needs and developing human potential and resources at the local, national and international levels.

In promoting human progress, social workers strive to confront the social evils such as the strife and hardship of poverty, delinquency, ill-health, homelessness, hunger, social inequalities, illiteracy and unemployment. In responding to the demands of advocating citizens' rights, social workers strive to expand the choices and freedoms that people enjoy as well as the quality of life. In essence, social work embraces a holistic approach to human progress.

Social development overview in Kenya

High and persistent poverty remains a significant challenge among certain groups and in certain regions in Kenya (Mwabu *et al.*, 2004). Poverty estimates in Kenya reveal that poverty varies widely by region and its incidence is particularly high among pastoralists living in the semi-arid regions of the country (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2007; Wambugu and Munga, 2009). Overall, the majority of the Kenyan poor are disproportionately found in rural areas; households headed by widows and less educated persons; large households; and certain types of occupations such as subsistence farmers, unskilled public and private sector workers and unpaid family workers (GoK, 1998). Despite the existence of a large network of poverty reduction institutions (government and non-governmental), progress towards poverty reduction in Kenya is clearly inadequate when measured against international development targets.

At the moment, a clear picture of social development in Kenya is encompassed within The Kenya Vision 2030 (GoK, 2007) blueprint for national development launched in 2007 which aims at transforming Kenya into a middle-income country by 2030. The vision is anchored on three key pillars: economic, social and political governance. The economic pillar aims to achieve an economic growth rate of 10% per annum. The social pillar seeks to create just, cohesive and equitable social development in a clean and secure environment. The political pillar aims to realise an issue-based, people-centred, result-oriented and accountable democratic system (GoK, 2007). The social pillar in particular has more direct areas for social development which it aims to transform, including education and training, health, water and sanitation, environment, housing and urbanisation, gender, youth, sports and culture, and promotion of equity and poverty reduction.

In spite of these efforts, major development challenges continue to confront Kenya. These include the inability to create jobs that are required to address the high rate of unemployment which is aggravated by the rising number of youths leaving school, the growing number of Kenyans living in poverty, gender discrimination, high income inequality, underdeveloped infrastructure, insecurity, corruption and weak governance, and high disease prevalence and mortality. Nonetheless, several measures to address poverty and thereby promote social development have been attempted as expounded in the subsequent sections.

Poverty reduction strategies in Kenya

Different measures by successive governments have been attempted to deal with poverty in Kenya since independence in 1963. They range from policy directives, structural developments and reforms in administrative procedures meant to improve the livelihoods

of the poor. Whereas several of these measures were implemented at different periods since independence, this paper focuses on some of those attempted at the onset of the new millennium. These include: policy initiatives, devolved funds and operational initiatives such as the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF) and the Women's Enterprise Fund.

Policy initiatives

One of the prominent poverty alleviation strategies initiated by the Kenyan government is the promotion of rapid economic growth and creation of employment opportunities as contained in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (Manda *et al.*, 2001; Geda *et al.*, 2001; Wambugu and Munga, 2009). Rapid economic growth was viewed as the key to poverty alleviation and was also part of the National Poverty Eradication Plan. Other policies that targeted poverty eradication include the Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation 2002-2007 (ERS) that primarily emphasised economic growth and job creation and the first Medium Term Plan 2008 - 2012 which aimed at increasing real gross domestic product growth from the estimated 7% in 2007 to 10% in 2012. The ERS was replaced in 2007 by the Kenya Vision 2030 which is a broader blueprint for development with several measures for poverty reduction in the country.

The challenge of economic growth policies, however, is that they are based on an implicit assumption that wealth generated from the vibrant sectors of the economy will eventually trickle down to the rest of the economy and sections of the population. The underlying argument is that as countries become wealthier on average, the incidence of income poverty falls and so does non-income poverty (World Bank, 2003). Whereas this may be true, it is the contention of this paper that economic growth is necessary but not a sufficient condition for reducing poverty. The tremendous growth realised as a result of economic growth and development policies has had insignificant gains in social development in Kenya. The huge increase of wealth generated by these policies has not been accompanied by parallel progress in poverty reduction or considerable human development.

Devolved funds

The establishment of decentralised funds to reach out to needy populations at the grassroots level is another major effort towards poverty reduction in Kenya. Through these funds, decision-making responsibilities for local development initiatives are redistributed from government ministries and departments to constituencies. These funds were established to meet specific needs for specific groups of people and have different conditions for access. The funds include the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), Local Authority Transfer Fund, HIV/AIDS Fund, Rural Electrification Levy Fund, Secondary School Education Bursary Fund, Road Maintenance Levy Fund, and the Free Primary Education.

Among other objectives, the funds aim at reducing regional disparities and resolving emerging developmental issues such as HIV/AIDS and youth unemployment. The first annual progress report on the implementation of the First Medium Term Plan of Kenya Vision 2030 reveals that these funds have had some positive impacts. A good example is the

Free Primary Education where the gross enrolment rate increased from 108.9% in 2007 to 109.8% in 2008 (GoK, 2010a). Similarly, through the CDF, different communities across the country have become empowered and managed to create tangible infrastructure for their own good in their communities. Lombard and Wairire (2010) observe that the CDF, if well implemented, has the potential to reduce inequalities in terms of opportunities and resources and, by extension, facilitate maximum realisation of individual potential, particularly amongst Kenya's poor and vulnerable groups.

Operational initiatives

These involve strategies that encompass activities that are practically operational at the grassroots level with a potential to reduce poverty and in the process promote social development. These activities are governed by well-defined regulations and conditions which must be strictly adhered to by the members or participants. The execution of such activities is time-specific, marked by clear structures for effective implementation. Some good examples of such initiatives include the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF) and the Women's Enterprise Fund

Youth Enterprise Development Fund: The YEDF was established in 2006 with the sole purpose of reducing unemployment among the youth who account for over 61% of the unemployed in the country. Key activities include: providing on-lending loans for youth enterprises; facilitating the youth to invest in small and medium enterprises; supporting youth-oriented enterprises to develop linkages with large enterprises; facilitating the marketing of products and services of youth enterprises in both domestic and international markets; and facilitating youth employment in the international labour market. A notable achievement of this initiative is that it has helped thousands of youth build their enterprises through market support and entrepreneurship training (<http://www.youthfund.go.ke>).

Women's Enterprise Fund: This fund is a semi-autonomous government agency under the Ministry of Devolution and Planning. The institution is a national fund that was established under the Government Financial Management Regulations in 2007. It is a flagship project under the social pillar in the Kenya Vision 2030 that promotes the first and third MDGs on poverty reduction, gender equality and women's empowerment, respectively. The Fund's vision is "to socially and economically empower Kenyan women entrepreneurs for economic development" and the mission is "to mobilize resources and offer access to affordable credit and business support services to women entrepreneurs" (www.wef.co.ke). The Fund has recorded tremendous growth within the five years of operations with a loan portfolio in excess of 3.6 billion Kenyan Shillings and over 700,000 clients in the 290 constituencies in Kenya as at March 2014 (www.wef.co.ke).

Obstacles to social development and poverty reduction in Kenya

Poverty has been persistent in Kenya despite the government's efforts to combat it through national development programmes. The Institute for Policy Analysis and Research (2002) identified some general factors that have been an impediment to poverty reduction efforts in Kenya: duplication of efforts by institutions involved in poverty reduction programmes, including the government, civil society organisations and the private sector; lack of

adequate resources; lack of clear and consistent policy direction; lack of transparency and accountability; lack of stakeholder participation; and lack of effective governance.

In addition, corruption and resource misappropriation has significantly impeded economic growth and poverty reduction in Kenya. Through corruption, the government loses huge amounts of revenue that could have otherwise been used in improving welfare programmes. Ikiara (1998) attributes the high level of corruption to a lack of adequate accountability in the public sector. Also, due to corruption, the relations between the government and the donor community have been strained at different points in time. This has caused the government to lose an important source of funds that can be used to promote economic growth and poverty reduction programmes.

Ikiara (1998) further observes that low investor confidence due to political violence and uncertainty and deteriorating security has also increasingly undermined social development programmes in Kenya. Other factors include natural exigencies such as drought, famine and floods; HIV/AIDS; high population growth; illiteracy; environmental degradation; and laziness.

The PROSOWO¹ study in Kenya (Wairire *et al.*, 2014) identified political interference, corruption, lack of political goodwill, poor leadership and governance as the major factors that impact negatively on the efforts to reduce poverty and promote social development in Kenya as noticeable in Table 15.1.

Table 15.1: Sociopolitical issues that affect social development and poverty reduction

Issues	Frequency	%
Political interference	47	27
Corruption	28	16.1
Lack of political goodwill	28	16.1
Poor leadership and governance	28	16.1
Tribalism	19	10.9
Influence of culture and traditional practices	11	6.3
Reluctance to change by community members	4	2.3
Ignorance of community members towards development projects	4	2.3
High dependence on leaders	3	1.7
Poor gender representation in politics	2	1.1
Cumulative total	174	100

Source: Wairire *et al.* (2014)

Perhaps the worst of these obstacles is the failure to optimally utilise the strategies and initiatives put in place to combat poverty and enhance social development by some people for whom those initiatives were established. Some youth and women for example are not even aware about the resources and provisions entailed in the Youth Development Enterprise Fund and the Women Enterprise Fund, respectively. Although many youth and women have no doubt benefitted immensely from these two initiatives as earlier mentioned, there are several others who have not made efforts to access these funds owing

¹ PROSOWO = Promotion of Professional Social Work in East Africa.

to different reasons. The government has not widely promoted these two initiatives and the success stories of the youth and women who have already benefited from them. The modalities to access these funds are also a bit complicated for many youth and women, particularly those in rural areas. The requirement to download application forms from the Internet and also to get other details online is a strong hindrance for the youth and women who are not ICT-compliant and/or who have no access to the Internet. It is prudent to understand the possible roles for social work in poverty reduction and social development strategies which, in turn, can prepare social workers to deal with the obstacles highlighted above.

The social development initiatives and strategies discussed above as well as the obstacles therein have implications for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. These goals will next be discussed within the context of Kenya.

Millennium Development Goals and poverty reduction for social development

In September 2000, at the United Nations Millennium Summit, world leaders agreed to a set of eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that have since been placed at the centre of the global development agenda (World Bank, 2003). The three pillars under which the Kenya Vision 2030 blueprint for national development was established is complementary to these MDGs and the core sectors within it aimed partly at facilitating the realisation of the MDGs in Kenya. The pursuit of MDGs, as expounded in the following sections, has, therefore, contributed to poverty reduction and social development in different ways, the challenges involved in the process of their implementation notwithstanding.

Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

This goal aims at reducing by 2015 half the proportion of the population living in extreme poverty (World Bank, 2003). Whereas several recommendations have been made to ensure that this goal is realised, poverty levels have not changed much. Besides, most of the recommendations appear to be highly technical and without a mass appeal for the larger poor populations. Many continue living in a state of desperation resigned to hopelessness and a feeling that they cannot overcome their wanting situation. Other factors, including rapid population increase, unemployment, ethnic tensions and tribalism, climate change and HIV/AIDS make it very unlikely that Kenya will achieve this goal. Professional social workers could be more active by giving people hope of overcoming their unfavourable circumstances and by engaging in poverty reduction initiatives. This may be done at the policy level and the grassroots level as well (Healy and Wairire, 2014). Once people begin to believe in themselves, possibilities of positive response to poverty reduction measures begin to increase, and with the realisation of each poverty reduction recommendation, the more stable the people become.

Achieving universal primary education

This was meant to ensure that every child everywhere in the country will be able to complete at least primary schooling (UNESCO, 2010). One major step that the Kenyan

government took for this to be realised is to introduce free primary education throughout the country after the National Rainbow Coalition Government came to power in 2002. The implementation of this policy witnessed a notable increase in student enrolment all over the country. By May 2013, 92% of school-aged children were enrolled in primary school (World Bank, 2013). However, enrolment, retention, completion and progression had serious challenges for the realisation of this MDG. For example, the resources to build and equip extra infrastructure were not adequate. This, coupled with inadequate numbers of teachers to cater for the increased student populations, was an obstacle to the realisation of access to universal education. It is sad to note that some pupils still study under trees courses that otherwise require standard scientific laboratories.

Another drawback to this goal was a terrible belief amongst some Kenyans that free education is of poor standard and that it cannot make the recipient competent enough to compete with other children enrolled in private institutions where education is paid for by the parents or guardians. This attests to the fact that beliefs commonly held by the local people have serious drawbacks to any meaningful change intended to facilitate the realisation of universal primary education. Equally important to note is the fact that cultural practices, for example female genital mutilation (FGM), still remain significant among some communities in Kenya. Such practices are detrimental to the practical efforts put in place to realise this goal because to some communities who practice FGM, the girl can be married off once the rite has been done, thus denying her the opportunity to continue with her education. In this context, therefore, social workers in Kenya must be well versed with requisite skills to assist communities change from negative beliefs and cultural practices that obstruct meaningful interventions enshrined in this MDG to uplift their lives.

The goal, however, has the legal back-up from the Children's Act 2001 (National Council for Law Reporting, 2007) which has a provision that every child must be availed universal primary education and must not be taken through female genital mutilation. The challenge, though, is that the said Act and the provisions enshrined therein are still unknown to many in the Kenyan situation. Social workers need to be well equipped to play an active role in legal issues, including those essential for the realisation of universal primary education targets for the good of their clients. This can begin right at the training level by incorporating some paralegal training units in the social work curriculum since social work cannot fully operate in isolation of the law.

Promote gender equality and empower women

In this MDG, emphasis is on the need to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as an effective way to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate sustainable development. The main target for this goal is to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005 and at all levels by 2015 (World Bank, 2003). Whereas there has been marked improvement in the representation of women in different sectors such as the corporate industry, institutions of higher education, constitutional committees and commissions, public service, county governments, national assembly and even the senate (GoK, 2013), it will take some time to accord women parity with men.

Women still remain under-represented in both political and other leadership spheres. Serious gender gaps exist in access and control of resources, economic activities and political decision-making.

Healy and Wairire (2014) further point out that enrolment of Kenyan girls in schools has not improved significantly, particularly in the rural areas and those who enrol do not complete due to other factors, including the high costs of sanitary wear that makes them drop out of school. Besides, prohibitive religious and/or sociocultural practices and beliefs that perpetuate biases and abuses against women make it difficult for the realisation of this MDG. The new constitutional dispensation (GoK, 2010a), however, looks quite promising with regard to improving the position of women in the Kenyan society. This cannot be done without a sustained awareness of the need to uphold the dignity of women in the society. Social work can, therefore, play a significant role in social mobilisation, awareness creation and sensitisation, lobbying for more space for women in all spheres where they have not been visible, building coalitions and mobilising support for policy development to support initiatives that empower women, law reform and its implementation, and advocacy for gender mainstreaming.

Reduce child mortality

This MDG aims at reducing by two-thirds the mortality rate of children under five years by 2015 (GoK, 2010b). Since the 1990s, there have been some notable achievements in this goal, for example a significant drop in mortality rates of children under five years from 100 deaths per 1,000 live births to 72 in 2008 (GoK, 2010b). Some notable challenges for this MDG include: harmful social cultural practices, poverty, lack of access to health services, long distances to health facilities, reluctance to adopt good practices through behaviour change, and lack of male involvement in health seeking behaviour for under-five children (GoK and UNDP, 2005). In such scenarios, professional social work can play significant roles such as strengthening advocacy towards policy and resource mobilisation, awareness creation, strengthening and supporting behaviour change communication for improved and sustained health and hygienic practices at community level.

Improve maternal health

This goal focuses on tangible efforts to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity through the following two targets: reduce by three-quarters maternal mortality ratio; and achieve universal access to reproductive health by the year 2015 (GoK, 2010b). According to the United Nations (2010), achieving good maternal health requires quality reproductive health services and a series of well-timed interventions to ensure a woman's safe passage to motherhood. Unfortunately, high poverty levels and low levels of education for women often impede the realisation of this goal.

Main challenges for this goal include lack of availability, poor accessibility and utilisation of skilled birth attendants during pregnancy, child birth and post-natal period, poor involvement of communities in maternal care, poor health infrastructure in the arid and semi-arid regions, and low literacy levels among mothers (GoK and UNDP, 2005). Some crucial social work roles for this particular MDG include: advocating increased commitment and resources for maternal health; strengthening community-based maternal

health care approaches; and advocacy for legislative measures and policies that support maternal health (for example, paid maternity and paternity leave).

Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

The goal mainly focuses on measures that can effectively tackle the HIV/AIDS pandemic which, together with malaria, remain the major killer diseases in Kenya (GoK, 2010b). There has been marked progress, with rates of new HIV infection dropping significantly. Sustained control of these diseases is central for the realisation of other MDGs. Some harmful beliefs, fears and myths revolve around these diseases, and they pose a serious threat to the realisation of this MDG (GoK and UNDP, 2005). The potential social work roles in relation to this MDG are largely informative, preventive and rehabilitative both to the victim/patient, relatives and the larger community.

Ensure environmental sustainability

This is one of the MDGs that is rarely given prominence, yet it has serious bearing on all the other MDGs. The effects of climate change continue to dampen achievement of MDGs in Kenya and other countries in East Africa. Major challenges in this MDG include water catchment degradation, illegal encroachment, illegal cultivation, deforestation, degradation of natural resources due to pollution, poor waste management and desertification (GoK and UNDP, 2005). Major roles of social work may involve networking with relevant stakeholders such as line ministries, statutory bodies including Kenya Wildlife Service, Kenya Forest Service, National Environment Management Authority and local communities for practical interventions that involve protection, conservation and management of natural resources. Social workers have great potential as a link between their different client groups and the aforementioned stakeholders.

Develop a global partnership for development

This MDG gives international trade indicators that are intended to improve market access of developing countries and least developed countries' exports to the developed economy markets (GoK, 2010b). Trade in services such as transport and communication, postal and telecommunications, wholesale and retail trade are also critical for sustainable economic growth. Poor trade and investment environment, narrow export base and low value addition, and reliance on few international markets continue to be major challenges in the achievement of this MDG (GoK and UNDP, 2005).

Whereas MDGs are crucial for national development, professional social work must ensure that the gains derived therefrom are not attained at the expense of the dignity and rights of its people. Low wages, long working hours and poor working conditions in the industrial sector are key issues that social work must address to ensure that human rights, dignity and worth of individuals are not sacrificed at the altar of economic development. In this regard, social workers can liaise and network with the labour organisations that exist in the country such as the central organisation of trade unions.

An important observation regarding the MDGs is that there are still some social workers in Kenya who do not know them or have partial information about them. In addition, some of these MDGs have attracted more attention than others, directly or indirectly. This

was confirmed from the research findings of the PROSOWO project in Kenya (Wairire *et al.*, 2014). The findings indicated that 5% of social workers interviewed had never heard of MDGs, yet social workers are significant stakeholders in MDGs' realisation. However, the majority (56.4 %) of social workers were aware of the MDGs. A total of 83.7% of social workers were aware of the programmes undertaken in Kenya to realise MDGs. There was no particular sector in the MDGs that was not receiving some attention by social workers. Many social workers (76.2%) felt they were in one way or another advancing the global partnership for development agenda. About 67% of social workers indicated that they were involved in the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger; 57.4% were involved in a range of health-related activities such as improving maternal health, reducing child mortality and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; while about 49% were involved in gender empowerment (Wairire *et al.*, 2014).

From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that social work has great potential to contribute towards the realisation of MDGs. Some critical social work roles related to each MDG have been highlighted in the preceding sections of this article. However, it is important to distinctively conceptualise some other social work roles which are not directly related to MDGs but which have significant bearing on poverty reduction and social development in Kenya. These will next be examined.

Role of social work in poverty reduction and social development

A crucial purpose of social work is embodied in the empowerment of people through diverse strategies at different levels of intervention. Thus, being an empowering profession, social work has enormous potential to reduce poverty in Kenya. Its role and associated strategies suggest general ways to achieve goals, including that of poverty alleviation (DuBois and Miley, 2005). Key in this is educating and empowering local people to develop their own voice and act in their own interests. This has a potential to change their mindset and make them view their situations and circumstances differently. Healy and Wairire (2014) specifically opine that empowering women is an effective way to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable.

It should also be noted that poverty reduction strategies sometimes require some radical changes in the institutional patterns and structures that directly or indirectly contribute to poverty. This includes the general society where cultural beliefs and practices often obstruct different client groups from engaging in meaningful development initiatives at individual and/or community level. A strong mind, well informed and free from fear of reprisals from other members of the society is, therefore, essential for the community members to successfully undergo such changes. Along the same line, Midgley (2010) argues that Paulo Freire's conscientisation concept where social workers can engage their clients and help them to understand the power structures that impede their functioning and assist them to learn various techniques that will help them to challenge those structures, is significantly critical in such situations.

The ultimate explanation of the stagnation and regression in social development lies in unplanned growth and inefficient management and lack of control of the nation's resources (Musyoki, 2001). Siporin (1975) points out that resources are the available assets or

assets held in reserve that support social functioning, meet needs or resolve problems. In circumstances where there is improper utilisation of the available resources, there is greater possibility for sections of the populations to suffer deprivation and consequently be trapped in poverty. In such situations, social workers do not only help people who suffer from resource deprivation by facilitating their access to resources, but also coordinate the delivery of services and initiate new policies and programmes. They also play other significant roles as brokers, advocates, mobilisers, activists and catalysts in the search for more resources or their reallocation through structural and institutional changes.

Poverty has also been attributed to the existence of social inequalities and lack of respect for the people's civil and legal rights (World Bank, 2005). In this context, social workers are better placed to identify the unmet needs of their client groups and serve as whistle-blowers against existing social inequalities and erosion of legal rights that exploit and escalate their poverty levels. Social workers must also address gaps and barriers in the delivery of services and advocate policies that extend provisions for poverty reduction for different client groups.

Findings from the PROSOWO study (Wairire *et al.*, 2014) established that social workers in Kenya were playing a very active role in poverty reduction. Some of the activities they were involved in include: economic empowerment (54%), educational support (9.4%), training (7.4%) and provision of basic needs (6.4%), among others. Table 15.2 shows the spectrum of activities that social workers engaged in while addressing the plight of the poor.

Table 15.2: Social workers' roles in addressing poverty

Type of roles	Frequency	%
Economic empowerment through income-generating activities	109	54
Educational support (clothing and books)	19	9.4
Capacity-building through training	15	7.4
Provision of basic needs	13	6.4
Educational sponsorships	13	6.4
Cash transfers to orphans, vulnerable children and the elderly	10	5
Psycho-social support	8	4
Advocacy on human and child rights	6	3
Awareness creation to access health care	5	2.5
No response	4	2
Total	202	100

Source: Wairire *et al.* (2014)

Some critical observations emerge from the data presented above. One is that the largest numbers of social workers are actually involved in income-generating activities or sustainable ventures such as educational support/sponsorship. Only a few appeared to be involved in rehabilitative care (for example, psycho-social support, awareness/advocacy). The majority of social workers equally felt that income-generating activities were the most effective strategies in poverty reduction whether at the individual, group or community

level (Wairire *et al.*, 2014). This is a reflection of the fact that the social development approach is an integral part of social work practice in Kenya.

Child-specific programmes are also clearly being seen as pivotal in the fight against poverty. Interventions such as educational support/sponsorships, care for orphaned and vulnerable children, and child rights are at the core of poverty reduction. To combat poverty, children should not only be targeted but actually involved. This is partly because they have the greatest potential to break intergenerational cycles of poverty. Children are Kenya's best hope for transforming attitudes and behaviours about issues like literacy, wealth creation, self-determination, gender equality and how people relate with the environment.

As advocates, social workers link people with available resources or serve as intermediaries to press forward people's causes. Through advocacy, social work has the potential to awaken the consciousness of the marginalised and that of the general public about social problems and injustice. Barker (2003) argues that social workers through social activism are able to mobilise resources to change adverse conditions. In their brokerage role, social workers provide critical information about the existing resources so that people can access such resources in an appropriate and speedy manner.

All these roles require pertinent skills which not only help the social worker to reach out to a specific target group and engage them in development projects, but also build and maintain a professional relationship that enables the set goals to be realised without suspicion or animosity between the parties involved. Such skills, according to Midgley (2010), include the development of leadership, decision-making skills, enabling skills, skills in forming local community groups, skills in identifying local leaders able to initiate action, advocacy skills, skills that empower local people in different dimensions, coordinating and networking skills, skills that enable collaborative action, and mediating skills to ensure cooperation between different projects and agencies.

Conclusion

Kenya has made significant efforts towards poverty reduction and social development over the years. The scope for social work in complementing and enhancing those efforts cannot be underestimated. However, there is a need to engage social work practitioners not only at the implementation stages for those efforts but also at the policy level where the efforts are conceptualised. Similarly, social workers should be involved in the process of evaluating the effectiveness of poverty reduction activities implemented in both county and national governments. For more effectiveness in this, the training of social workers in institutions of higher learning must have a strong curriculum, regularly revised and updated to equip upcoming practitioners with requisite skills for the changing realities that impoverish people and block their potential to fully adopt the poverty reduction strategies undertaken by the government. Moreover, it is prudent to encourage partnerships between the government and other stakeholders who can enhance poverty reduction strategies being implemented in order to realise success. Poverty reduction and social development is an all-engaging process with different stakeholders playing different roles at different

stages of this process. Social work definitely has a significant role to play, alongside other professions, in addressing poverty and achieving social development.

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Social Development as the Privileged Model for Social Work Practice in Post-genocide Rwanda

Charles Kalinganire and Charles Rutikanga

Introduction

Poverty is one of the greatest universal challenges constituting a nexus of other different social problems such as hunger, HIV/AIDS and other diseases, malnutrition, low school enrolment, and limited access to health care. Poverty is the number one social problem that has been preoccupying governments, NGOs and various other actors at different levels. It continues to erode people's lives, especially in developing countries and more accurately in sub-Saharan Africa, as has been aptly stated by Chitereka (2009, 146):

Research has shown that one of the main triggers of social problems in Africa is the scourge of poverty (Muzaale, 1987). Despite the fact that Africa is potentially the richest continent on the planet, it is actually the poorest. For instance, studying poverty figures in Africa produces a daunting picture. 315 million people: one in two people in sub-Saharan Africa survive on less than one dollar per day.

While handling this crucial problem, many approaches have been devised and professionals from various disciplines, including social workers, have been doing their best in helping people to uplift their living conditions. Unfortunately, it is noted that so far:

...the approach of social work practice which was introduced and which remains in force in many African countries is the curative or remedial approach. This approach is really reactive and dealing with the symptoms but not the real causes of problems. (Chitereka, 2009, 145)

The overemphasis on casework as the method of intervention appears to be inappropriate in developing countries. For social work to be effective in the African context, the adoption of the social development paradigm is suggested in the sense of liberating and empowering people to take charge of their affairs of their lives instead of having them rely solely on the state for assistance.

Using Rwanda as a case study, this chapter examines the particular contribution of social work in tackling the problem of poverty in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide. More concretely, it explores the relevance of the community-based approaches promoted by the government of Rwanda in the perspective of involving the people in their own

development by empowering the most vulnerable. This is aligned with what Hare (2004, 415) says:

Promoting the empowerment and liberation of people are important social work processes... Since its inception, social work has been particularly concerned with people who are poor, vulnerable and oppressed, as well as those who are coping with the problems and vicissitudes of living. The goal of empowering people to handle their lives more effectively has in recent times become more prominent in social work thinking.

The focus of the chapter is to identify and discuss the role of social work in poverty reduction and the promotion of social development. The chapter starts with providing a conceptual framework and background. This is followed by an examination of social workers' profile and their role. Subsequently, a discussion of the social work profession contribution to poverty reduction is provided, and corresponding approaches are referred to. Finally, issues of social work education for social development and poverty reduction are discussed.

Conceptual framework and background

Poverty affects not just a few individuals but society as a whole. Therefore, "we as a community, society, or world should do something about this" (Crone, 2011, 2). Poverty is a complex social problem and some authors such as Strydom and Tlhojane (2008, 34) have questioned the adequacy of measuring poverty in absolute terms:

There are many ways of looking at [it]. When poverty is measured in absolute terms, it refers to the financial means necessary for people to survive from day to day... The problem with measures of absolute poverty is that they do not take into account the expectations, norms, values and customs of particular communities.

When referring to relative poverty, these authors stress that its measures consider people's perception of how poor they feel. Very often, and this remains the core consideration in this chapter, poverty is understood as a condition that occurs when people cannot obtain adequate resources of which the lack of sufficient income is priority. To address this social ill, different actions, including social work interventions, have been undertaken in the perspective of improving the quality of people's lives. Since its inception, social work has been helping disadvantaged members of the society with special attention to the poor, but the services rendered were mostly curative and remedial. Over the years, different authors (cf. Kaseke, 1991; Midgley, 1995; Gray, 1996; Estes, 1998; Hare, 2004; Osei-Hwedie, 2007) have argued that this approach is not helpful in impacting on poverty, particularly in developing countries, and they devised a gradual shift towards a developmental approach. This shift includes promoting community practice intervention and the necessity to encourage the full participation of needy individuals in the development process. Developmental social work is defined by Gray (1996, 13) as a

type of social work which diverges from the residual, service-oriented approach directed at special categories of people in need to holistic, planned, development strategies which place people and human rights at the centre of social planning... Developmental social work comprises non-remedial forms of intervention. It means basically employing community development as a major intervention strategy.

Developmental social work adopts social development as a model of practice to overcome the root causes of poverty by guiding “collective action toward the elimination of all forms of violence, [exclusion] and social oppression” (Estes, 1998, 8). Throughout this chapter, the term social development is understood as “a process of planned social change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole in conjunction with a dynamic process of economic development” (Midgley, 1995, 25). As specified by Midgley (1995, 23), it is important to keep in mind that:

...social development does not deal with individuals either by providing them with goods or services, or by treating or rehabilitating them. Instead, social development focuses on the community or society, and on wider social processes and structures... Social development does not cater only to needy individuals but seeks to enhance the well-being of the whole population... Unlike the other approaches which are primarily concerned with maintaining adequate levels of welfare, social development transcends this static posture by actively promoting a developmental process.

In the same perspective, Estes (1998, 2) states that as the means of developmental social work, “social development refers to the process through which people are helped to realise the fullness of the social, political, and economic potentials that already exist within them”.

In Rwanda, after the 1994 genocide that resulted in more than one million people killed and the destruction of the social fabric, there is determination to deal with the consequences of this genocide and combat the most pressing social problems, particularly poverty. Overall, the main concern of the government remains to uplift the living conditions of the population by promoting social development. For this to happen, various policies, programmes, projects and strategies, built on local realities, were put in place such as community development policy; gender policy; sector strategies like sector cooperatives; and the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS).

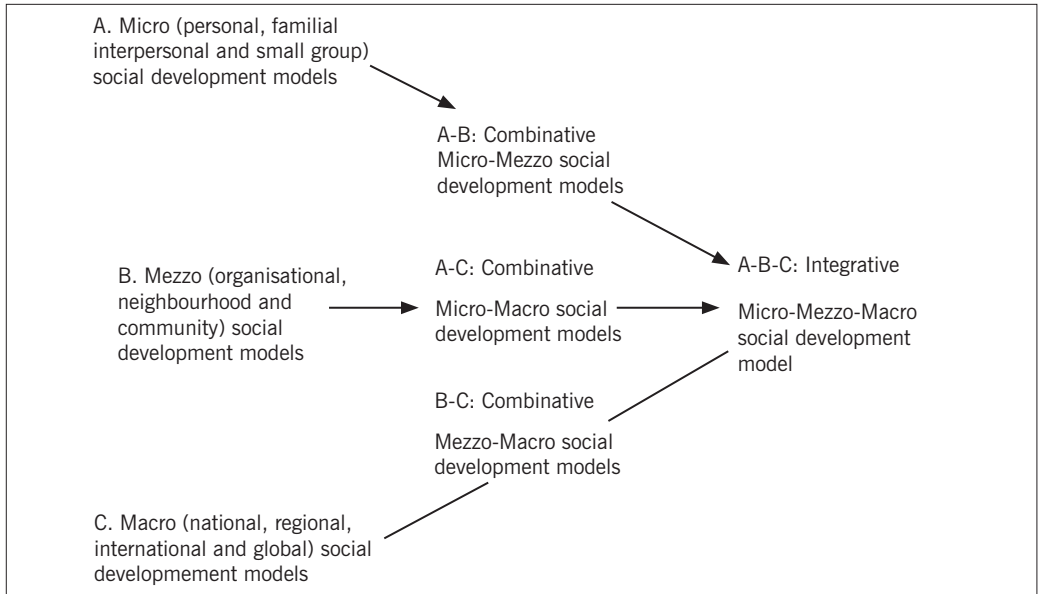
Development actors, including the government, NGOs, community-based organisations as well as private agencies are determined to embrace the national priority of advancing socioeconomic development as quickly as possible. These development actors often meet in a Joint Action Development Forum (JADF) as a mechanism to reinforce synergies and partnership between the government, development partners, civil society and the private sector aimed at defining and setting strategies for the enhancement of people’s living conditions. Indeed, JADF provides a good space for dialogue and sharing of experience, but also a forum to discuss ways of improving citizen participation in developmental activities in fighting poverty, particularly at local levels.

The underlying philosophy by the present government has been the promotion of self-reliance through the concept of ‘*Kwiha Agaciro*’, a Kinyarwanda phrase loosely translated as “taking pride in one’s own success in addressing social problems” instead of external aid-driven development. In view of this, it became a practice that community members in the same locality gather and assess their needs in order to plan for their development. To this end, people join efforts and initiate collective activities (amongst others, maintenance of roads, building schools, housing organisation for the homeless) by using first and foremost their own resources through equitable contributions. In this endeavour, the government plays the key role of providing technical assistance, but it also allocates

material and financial resources wherever necessary through the national annual budget. Most importantly, the government creates a conducive environment (introduction of innovative practices, establishment of development business funds, and so on) so that people are progressively enabled to mobilise and manage forces and resources in their respective communities. Consequently, poverty prevalence reduced from 56.7% in 2006 to 45% in 2012 (Republic of Rwanda, 2012).

The road to healing from the aftermath of the genocide consisted of three phases. The emergency phase from 1994 to 1997 was concerned with responding to fundamental needs such as food, shelter, clothing and medicines. The rehabilitation phase from 1998 to 2000 focused on rebuilding the social fabric through peace and reconciliation programmes with the aim of helping people to recover from the shocks of the genocide. In the development phase (2000 - 2005), the main objective was to promote income-generating activities and increase agricultural productivity. The sustainable development phase followed after 2005 which includes grassroots participation in decision-making and empowerment of all people with a focus on the vulnerable groups in the community. The above framework is in line with the integrative social development model as proposed by Meinert, Padeck and Sullivan (1994, in Kalinganire 2002, 25) which postulates that interventions have to go beyond the basic and combinative models at the micro and mezzo levels to integrated approaches that take into account the micro, mezzo and macro levels of interventions concurrently as indicated in Figure 16.1.

Figure 16.1: Basic, combinative and integrative model of social development



Source: Meinert, Padeck and Sullivan (1994, in Kalinganire, 2002, 25)

In this figure, most likely pathways for practitioners to move towards integrative social development are depicted by arrows; less likely pathways are depicted by lines. The figure outlines that social development takes place within three major social system levels which

represent three sets of models. Meinert, Padeck and Sullivan (1994 in Kalinganire 2002) present the three systemic social development models as micro (model A), mezzo (model B) and macro (model C). These three models form the foundation for an integrative social development model. In addition to the three sets of basic system levels and corresponding A, B and C models, another three sets of combinative models for social development emerge, namely, a micro-mezzo (model A-B), a mezzo-macro (model B-C) and a micro-macro (model A-C). Finally, an integrative model of social development (model A-B-C) is a culmination of the basic and combinative models. Manifestly it is important to keep in mind that the mezzo-systemic level of an organisation, neighbourhood and community plays a vital role in linking the micro and macro levels of social development. Throughout the chapter, particular attention is put on the integrative model (model A-B-C) with a focus on micro-mezzo and macro interventions as the best way to broadly tackle poverty and related social problems in Rwanda.

The following sections present the nature and role of social work within the social development framework described above. The discussion draws from the empirical PROSOWO study (Promotion of Professional Social Work in East Africa) conducted in Rwanda in 2011. The study explored the role of social work in poverty reduction and the realisation of millennium development goals (Kalinganire and Rutikanga, 2014). Using quantitative and qualitative methodologies, the study collected data from 103 social work practitioners, 27 social work employers, 18 social work educators, 114 final year social work students, and six key informants at the social policy making level. In addition, four focus group discussions were held with social work clients. The study was carried out in areas purposively selected representing both rural and urban contexts. In terms of social work educators and students, all the three higher education institutions hosting social work programmes in Rwanda were covered.

Overall, a description of the variety of experiences from different respondents on the status of the social work profession in Rwanda and its relevance in promoting social development and tackling poverty is made below. Firstly, a profile of social workers and their fields of practice is presented.

Rwanda social workers' profile and their areas of intervention

The profile of social workers in Rwanda is based on the socio-demographic characteristics of practitioners, employers, educators and students who were involved in this study. First of all, 67% of the social work practitioners were female; 83.5% had a bachelor's degree in social work (BSW); 93.2% obtained their degree from a national public institution; and 72.8% completed their BSW degree between 2000 and 2009. Concerning employers, 59.3% were female; only 25.9% had a bachelor's degree in social work; and 74% obtained their degree from a national public institution. In terms of social work education, 40% of the educators had a BSW and 40% had a master's degree in social work; while 20% had attained some basic training in social work. 50% of the educators obtained their qualifications in a national public institution and 50% from outside Africa. In terms of the period of completion, 70% completed their studies between 2000 and 2009. Lastly, the surveyed students were composed of 60.5% female and 39.5% male.

When social work formally started in 1998 as a response to the spread of vulnerable groups due to the 1994 genocide, the following terminologies were collected to describe the broad profile of roles social workers have to play in Rwandan society (University College Cork¹, 1999): *Umujyanama w'imibereho myiza y'abaturage* (counsellor in social affairs); *Umuhuza* (coordinator); *Umukangurambaga* (animator of the community; *Umufasha w'abatishoboye* (helper of vulnerable groups); *Umuhoza* (someone who gives consolation; and *Ruburirabose* (who informs the community about all possible problems).

Social workers in Rwanda define the social work profession as:

...a practice that applies specialised skills and knowledge to raise awareness on social problems and ensure that social services as well as interventions provided are self-strengthened, oriented and integrate ethical values and promote social cohesion in order to achieve sustainable social well-being of the population.

On the whole, the discussions stressed that social work practice in Rwanda should be mainly based on community work considered as “the process of assisting ordinary people to improve their own communities by undertaking collective action” (Twelvetrees, 1993, 1).

Social workers in Rwanda have been playing facilitative roles (by stimulating and mobilising community members to participate in their own development); educational as well as representational roles whereby the focus was on setting up a development agenda; inspiring the people; interacting with external bodies; and advocating and networking for the good of clients at various levels. Throughout their interventions, social workers draw particular attention to the fight against poverty and they do this by referring to the policies and programmes put in place by the government. Empirical findings in our study showed that 48.4% of surveyed practitioners are targeting changes in clients' lives for long-term improvement. They revealed that group work, community organisation and social development are the most used methods in practice and account for 53% in total. On their side, 59.6% of students declared that they mostly conduct their fieldwork in areas of community development and organising. The following sections will discuss concretely social work's contribution in combating poverty and the core orientation for the emerging profession to establish its roots in Rwanda.

The social work profession's response to poverty in post-genocide Rwanda

In absolute terms, poverty in Rwanda is understood as a situation in which specific categories of people are incapable of meeting their basic needs (including food, housing, clothing, health and education) and this varies from household to household. In general, six categories of households (as shown in Table 16.1) defined with the participation of the community members themselves are so far considered; these are: “*Umutindi nyakujya*

¹ University College Cork is a UK-based university that has been working in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide against Tutsi in the particular domain of child studies, emphasising its activities on training of (assistant) social workers from public as well as civil society who had to intervene at different levels in favour of distressed vulnerable groups (genocide survivors in general; widows; child-headed households; the elderly; prisoners; displaced people; etc.).

[those in abject poverty]; *Umutindi* [the very poor]; *Umukene* [the poor]; *Umukene wifashije* [the resourceful poor]; *Umukungu* [the food rich] and *Umukire* [the money rich]" (Howe and McKay, 2005, 7). Obviously, the first two categories demand particular attention from social workers for either mid- or longer-term intervention.

Table 16.1: Characteristics of households in Rwanda

Category of Household	Characteristics
<i>Umutindi nyakujya</i> (those in abject poverty)	Those who need to beg to survive: They have no land or livestock and lack shelter, adequate clothing and food. They fall sick often and have no access to medical care. Their children are malnourished and they cannot afford to send them to school.
<i>Umutindi</i> (the very poor)	The main difference between the <i>umutindi</i> and the <i>umutindi nyakujya</i> is that this group is physically capable of working on land owned by others, although they themselves have either no land or very small landholdings, and no livestock.
<i>Umukene</i> (the poor)	These households have some land and housing. They live on their own labour and produce, and although they have no savings, they can eat, even if the food is not very nutritious. However, they do not have surplus to sell in the market. Their children do not always go to school; and they often have no access to health care.
<i>Umukene wifashije</i> (the resourceful poor)	This group shares many of the characteristics of the <i>umukene</i> but, they have small ruminants and their children go to primary school.
<i>Umukungu</i> (the food rich)	This group has larger landholdings with fertile soil and enough to eat. They have livestock, often have paid jobs, and can access health care.
<i>Umukire</i> (the money rich)	This group has land and livestock, and often has salaried jobs. They have good housing, often own a vehicle, and have enough money to lend and to get credit from the bank. Many migrate to urban centres.

Source: Howe and McKay (2005, 7)

To date, appreciable changes in terms of combating poverty have taken place in Rwanda. Poverty in Rwanda has dropped by 11.8% since 2006 (Republic of Rwanda, 2012). However, the path is still long and there is much to do. It is the conviction of different stakeholders, including social work professionals, that success is possible with the involvement of the citizens in their own development. A social work practitioner in Huye revealed that:

...with the participatory poverty assessment the population has been discovering the priority needs and initiating in consequence adequate activities helping them to generate incomes and to handle specific problems such as malnutrition, health and education issues.

This corroborates what was expressed by an employer in Nyarugenge:

Citizens not only can participate in developmental activities when mobilised but most importantly they are owners of their destinies and through self-help activities, they are capable to overcome poverty.

In practice, the specific role of social workers in Rwanda, although sometimes usurped by other professionals such as sociologists or psychologists, has been paramount. Previously

(particularly during the emergency and rehabilitation phases) social work focused on relief services in favour of various vulnerable groups but is now refocusing its attention on poverty reduction. As stated earlier, the prominence of an integrative model of micro-mezzo and macro practice approaches to fight poverty is judged as appropriate. Research findings indicate that social work professionals' intervention in contributing to poverty reduction include various ways.

Social workers intervene in various specialist fields and are playing the roles of educators/trainers, community development organisers and programme administrators. They have been particularly active in promoting development programmes by helping people in initiating income-generating projects and improving their performance through skills training. This is shown by a social work practitioner who declared:

We are making a difference on the ground through the roles we are playing at micro, mezzo and macro levels... We are sincerely happy of our achievements even though we may multiply efforts in order to transform more the minds of our clients so that they could effectively exercise their rights and participate in decision-making affecting their well-being. (Social worker in Nyarugenge, Kigali City, 2011)

Our research findings revealed that social workers are actively involved in handling problems related to poverty. This was confirmed by all 27 surveyed employers. One employer said:

Since we started to use social work professionals, we are handling poverty more adequately because they are assisting our service beneficiaries through 'participatory poverty assessment', planning and implementation of social development projects. (Social work employer in Nyarugenge, Kigali City, November 2011)

In terms of poverty reduction and social development, social work interventions focus mostly on cooperatives, income-generating projects and community development. Furthermore, interventions target empowerment, education and promotion of gender equality. Social workers also participate in different activities targeting behaviour change and awareness-raising with regard to full participation of people at all levels of social organisation.

The main concrete activities that social workers engaged in were: training of members of cooperatives; organisation of the youth in different self-help clubs; interventions for HIV/AIDS prevention; family planning services; delinquency prevention, counselling, resettlement and reintegration of children living on the streets; group therapy with a focus on gender-based violence; and advocacy for women's rights to land ownership and inheritance.

Social workers perform these roles directly and indirectly through equipping community-based volunteers to intervene with required skills. These volunteers then take up responsibility for various interventions at the grassroots level. In this regard, one of the social work students interviewed reiterated the importance of such community-based mobilisation and skills training:

Throughout my internship, I appreciated the talks and related discussions that were regularly prepared and provided by social workers to Ubudehe [community-based

poverty reduction] programme and cooperatives representatives, to community health workers or other mixed groups of different categories of people. I had an opportunity to lead some sessions and I found that the role of a social worker is simply to stimulate and empower the client while the latter defines himself/herself the needs and priorities to be taken into consideration for effective planning. I was impressed to see how people were often suggesting relevant solutions to their problems! I remember for example the idea expressed by a participant when he said that the best way of tackling poverty in a village is to raise trust among the residents and to avoid all kinds of complex situations; afterwards rich and poor people could sympathise and help each other throughout the development endeavours. (A fourth year social work student, 2011)

The above view was also shared by social work employers and key informants, especially those from Ministries and Parliament who expressed a common concern that more social work professionals are needed in order to deal firmly with the problem of poverty. It was stressed that the particular problems characterising Rwanda in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide might be addressed meticulously and should emphasise consciousness raising so that people could participate in the reconstruction of the social fabric and in their own development. Indeed, it emerged from the study that the social mobilisation for collective action initiatives in which social work intervention was favoured has yielded many results, including the construction of schools, the construction of houses for the homeless, and various community-based services. Such a perspective should draw for success on the International Federations of Social Workers' key principles: "Participation, self-reliance, sustainability, and empowerment are the key principles often applied by social workers in the design for poverty reduction strategies and in fostering social integration." (IFSW, 2012) Similarly, reference should be made to the new social work orientation in the African context of 'building on the indigenous' in the sense of "improving professional expertise in relation to local needs, establishing greater legitimacy, and improving social work's contributions to the society" (Osei-Hwedie, 2002, 314).

Throughout the study referred to in this chapter, it was found that social workers in Rwanda are among the key role players who have been helping to resolve the micro and mezzo issues and above all, create societal macro changes to overcome such problems that people on the whole were faced with in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide. To move forward and to strengthen these achievements, they should promote the social development paradigm as privileged by the government of Rwanda and base their interventions on the combination of indigenous approaches with Western social work theories and perspectives.

Indigenous ways to combat poverty and advance social development in Rwanda

In order to promote the participation of citizens in their own development, the government of Rwanda chose to come up with an innovative use of neo-traditional cultural institutions as operational tools to support the implementation of the country's poverty reduction programmes. For this to happen, various home-grown solutions were introduced as practical indigenous ways of overcoming the immense challenges faced by Rwanda. In

particular, these indigenous ways were: *Ubudehe* (collective action to combat poverty); *Gacaca* (informal conflict settlement arrangements); *Imihigo* (competitive performance contracts and accountability mechanisms adopted as a means of planning to accelerate the progress towards economic development and poverty reduction); *Ingando* (Solidarity Camps); *Itorero* (cultural mentoring and leadership training); *Umuganda* (communal work); *Girinka Munyarwanda* (one cow per poor family); and *Agaciro* Development Fund (a fund made of the voluntary contributions of Rwandans, aimed at achieving financial autonomy and accelerating Rwanda's socioeconomic development goals). All this is guided by broad, long- as well as mid-term programmes and development strategies including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Vision 2020 *Umurenge* and the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy, Rwanda's medium-term strategy for economic growth, poverty reduction and human development.

These local approaches serve as framework for social work interventions for poverty reduction instead of relying only on predominantly Western models of poverty reduction. In this regard, 87.4% of social work practitioners and all social work employers who participated in the study confirmed that they have been combining the theories learnt and the government-recommended local approaches in their practice. They stressed that so far *Ubudehe*, *Girinka* and *Imihigo* are invaluable indigenous approaches that help to promote people's participation in their development and that are considered very suitable in addressing poverty. Respondents particularly singled out the *Ubudehe* approach, a traditional practice that fosters collective action at village level (also emphasised by Habiyonizeye and Mugunga, 2012) as one of the most effective interventions for poverty reduction in Rwanda. Its main objective is to create spaces for civic participation in self-governance, poverty analysis, local problem-solving and social planning. According to the research findings, the *Ubudehe* initiative has promoted people's engagement and ownership in development processes. It has facilitated their understanding of poverty through the analysis of their own problems; the creation of incentives for joint action at community level; promotion of strong partnership among stakeholders who assist community members through mutual self-help groups or cooperatives; and creation of networks for resource flows from the national government to the local levels. According to Buhura (2011), *Ubudehe* is a way through which Rwanda seeks to respond to its people's problems from a social and cultural perspective which is in line with the country's poverty reduction strategy and rooted in the MDGs. One social work practitioner described the *Ubudehe* approach in the following words:

Ubudehe has contributed meaningfully to rural development and the fight against poverty among the very poor. The approach has tremendously helped our clients identify their own problems, analyse them and find adequate solutions. Our role as social workers has been only to facilitate, mobilise, empower and encourage clients to find solutions to their problems by themselves.²

With regard to *Girinka Munyarwanda*, social work practitioners and employers as well as clients said that this approach has multiple advantages such as providing milk and

² This was said during a dissemination and validation workshop held in Kigali on 20 November 2012.

associated products that allow for better nutrition, generation of income through selling milk and provision of manure for farmlands. One focus group participant expressed the importance of this indigenous approach as follows:

I was very poor, going hungry for days where I was unable to find food for my family. I received a cow through Girinka Programme and now I get milk for my family and I sell the extra milk to earn money that I use to pay school fees for my children, buy other family necessities, and pay for my family health insurances, and use the money to save for Umurenge SACCO. The same cow also provides manure for fertilising my farmland. In short, my economic status and the family living conditions changed appreciably. (Social work client in Cyahinda sector, Nyaruguru District, November 2011)

The participants reiterated their support for the adoption of these home-grown solutions to poverty reduction and improvement of individual welfare.

What is demonstrated under this section fits the core orientation of developmental social work that is based on the use of social development as its important means in enabling people to improve the quality of their lives by helping them to discover their own resources and their own ability to create influence and positive change. Developmental social work can be strengthened by training social workers in social development as will be next discussed.

Education and training for social development in Rwanda

Gray (1996) argues that change begins with education. If social workers are to successfully negotiate the changed paradigm to contribute more effectively to social development, the impetus will have to come from social work training. Although there is an appreciation that social work programmes in different social work training institutions prepare students to intervene in social development-related practice, there is still a need to develop the curricula to improve the training of social workers to contribute meaningfully to social development.

In relation to the value given to the social development perspective and poverty reduction in education and training, most of student participants (50%) strongly agreed and 45.6% agreed that social and economic development goals were covered during their training. In addition to this, 80.6% of the students stated that poverty-related issues were also well covered. With reference to the educators, 80% agreed that the social work curriculum covers social and economic development while 20% doubted about the perfect integration of the two aspects. When asked to specify whether poverty reduction is adequately addressed throughout social work training, 40% strongly agreed against 50% who simply agreed. Students at specific institutions indicated that the modules of 'Development perspectives', 'Development issues in Rwanda' and 'Project planning, management and evaluation' provide adequate opportunities to discuss issues related to poverty and social development. However, students also mentioned challenges in terms of the inadequacy of some approaches and theories, indicating a need for ongoing review of the curriculum to adapt it more to the local realities. Both students (79.8%) and educators (70%) confirmed that the social work training programmes mainly depend on materials produced in Western contexts such as Europe, USA and other more developed countries.

Even though 68% of social work practitioners and 100% employers stated that social workers are well trained to handle social development and poverty related issues, it appears evident that there is a need for self-learning, in-service training in social development approaches, including indigenous modules for social development and poverty reduction. Generally there is a need to adopt an integrative social development model which would guide social work practice and training in Rwanda.

From the foregoing discussion, there appears to be a mismatch between social work education and the practice requirements of a social development model. Whilst social development has been promoted in practice, the social work curricula in Rwanda are still largely modelled along the Western-based remedial model of social work. The over-reliance on Western textbooks and the paucity of locally generated literature that should capture the indigenous approaches to development further deepens the mismatch in education. For social development to be adequately implemented in practice it will need to be supported by a relevant curriculum that prepares social workers to effectively address poverty and other development challenges in the country.

Conclusion

The integrative social development model as outlined in this chapter appears as the best pathway to enhance people's well-being. This model promotes fuller participation of people at all levels of social organisation; it also emphasises the principles of self-reliance, integrity, social solidarity, bravery, sustainability and empowerment.

Overall, it emerged from the theoretical deliberations and empirical findings that social work training and practice in Rwanda should be strengthened if it is to make a meaningful contribution towards social developmental and poverty reduction. This implies, as emphasised by the research participants, that community practice methods are emphasised and modalities for indigenisation are progressively scrutinised. Thus, there is a need to build a workforce that has the knowledge and skills in integrating activities and services that not only address immediate needs but are also prepared to provide services that are community-sanctioned. For this to happen, it is recommended that social workers should be prepared to play the roles of community analysts, enablers, advocates, social planners, community organisers, social activists and social change agents.

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Redefining the Role of Social Work in the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and Social Development in Tanzania

Zena M. Mabeyo

Introduction

Tanzania is a poor country that is among the 189 states that endorsed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Its government has made good progress in aligning the agreed upon commitments with its national poverty reduction strategies (United Republic of Tanzania, 2008). However, despite efforts to mainstream these global goals and develop specific poverty reduction policies and strategies, the country is yet to significantly reduce poverty. The social work profession has a stake in the creation of a world free of poverty and should, therefore, contribute to the achievement of the global and national development goals. However, the contribution of social work to the realisation of MDGs, in general, and poverty reduction, in particular, had hitherto not been assessed. To bridge this gap, this chapter presents some empirical findings of a study on the role of social work in poverty reduction and the achievement of the MDGs in Tanzania (for more detail, see Mabeyo, Ndung'u and Riedl, 2014).

The social work profession has been practised in Tanzania since 1947. Just like other African countries, the profession was imported and transplanted by the British colonialists. To date, the profession continues to largely borrow and apply the Western social work models and approaches. Practitioners have not found their own unique and contextual appropriate models to inform and guide practice in order for the profession to be an influential force for change (Kreitzer, 2012, 183). This happens despite the fact that authors such as Kreitzer (2012) have stressed the need to cut the umbilical cord of Western social work education and stop the application of interventions that do not fit the African context. The current social, economic, political and technological changes pose challenges and problems that require changed social work roles, methods and approaches. For instance, the persistently high rates of income poverty among the majority of Tanzania populations and its associated effects on the lives of the people suggest that reliance of traditional and individual therapeutic casework in problem-solving is not likely to create desirable and sustainable changes in the lives of the poor. Rather, the adoption of

community-based and social development approaches is more likely to offer solutions to the majority of clients affected by poverty. Therefore, an appraisal of social work practice and training was important in order to assess its adequacy and its specific contribution to poverty reduction and the realisation of MDGs.

The fundamental questions addressed in this chapter are: (i) Does the social work profession adequately contribute to the achievement of the MDGs (particularly reducing poverty) and social development? and (ii) Is the social work training adequately preparing students to that end? This chapter begins with a description of the key thematic concepts, namely: poverty, MDGs, social development and social work. The next section presents an overview of the research methodology of the said empirical study, followed by an examination of the roles and contribution of social workers to poverty reduction and the realisation of the MDGs. The premise of this chapter is that social work roles and the concomitant practice methods and approaches ought to be redefined in order to make the profession more responsive to the local problems and national priorities. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the way forward for social work in Tanzania in view of the need to take on more developmental roles in practice.

Poverty, MDGs, social development and social work

Poverty

Poverty is the greatest problem confronting the modern world (Cox and Pawar, 2006, 67). It has been defined by Davies (2000, 263) as the enforced lack of those material items which a majority of people accept as essential for participation in society. In the Tanzanian context, poverty has continued to be a persistent and pervasive problem despite efforts taken by the Tanzania government and other partners to address it. The 2000 - 2008 Millennium Development Goals Midway Evaluation Report (United Republic of Tanzania, 2008) indicates that the proportion of people living below the national basic needs poverty line of Tanzania Shillings 13,998 US\$ per month in 2007 stood at 33.6% (which translates to approximately 10).

Evidence from literature suggests that poverty eradication requires the concerted efforts of different actors. Thus, the social work profession with its embedded goal of promoting social well-being has to be well tuned to respond to this global challenge of poverty. This study has assessed the roles of social work practitioners in poverty reduction as well as the perceived adequacy of training in preparing future practitioners to effectively contribute towards poverty reduction. As will be elaborated later in this paper, findings indicate a major gap between skills acquired and actual practice, which calls for the redefining of social work roles, methods and approaches.

Millennium Development Goals

The MDGs are goals for development and poverty eradication contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, signed in 2000 by 189 countries which commits all member states to the realisation of specified targets by 2015 (United Nations, 2000). The MDGs initiative calls upon developed and developing countries to work in partnership

towards a world with less poverty, hunger and disease, greater survival prospects for mothers and infants, guaranteeing basic education for children, equal opportunities for women and healthier environment in support of the Agenda 2 principles of sustainable development (United Republic of Tanzania, 2008).

Various programmes have been implemented in line with the MDGs in Tanzania. An appraisal of the current status of the MDGs is crucial for bringing out specific roles that social work should play in order to quicken the realisation of these goals. The MDGs implementation progress report in Tanzania suggests that the country is still off the track especially with regard to improving the living standards of its poor populations (United Republic of Tanzania, 2008). While there are general challenges associated with the country being off track such as inadequate financing, this study addresses a specific challenge that relates to the involvement of social workers as a professional group in the achievement of the goals. A critical aspect in appraising the role of social work in achieving the MDGs is to ensure that they are reflected in the social work curricula and evidenced in practice. This was one of the research areas in this study.

Social development

Social development is not a new concept in social work; it is an approach that seeks developmental rather than remedial solutions that originally defined social work as a profession. Social development differs from social philanthropy, social work and social administration in several ways. Unlike philanthropy and social work, social development does not deal with individuals either by providing them with goods or services, or by treating or rehabilitating them. Instead, it focuses on the community or society, and on wider social processes and structures (Midgley, 1995, 23). The social development approach is, therefore, viewed as a comprehensive and universalistic approach that does not only cater for needy individuals but seeks to enhance the well-being of the whole population (Midgley, 1995).

New debates on social development position it as an approach which addresses social issues such as poverty in a comprehensive and integrated manner. By adopting a social development approach, the social work profession can actively promote a developmental process. It can also recognise its core contribution in addressing social issues from a human rights perspective, targeting valuable groups such as women within a broader context. The approach is perceived to be relevant to all societies where efforts are underway to promote economic development (Midgley, 1995, 1). The approach is also favoured due to its distinctiveness and dynamism in linking social and economic development goals. In order for social work to help clients reduce poverty and promote economic and social development, the profession needs to be revolutionary and transformative. It should not necessarily negate other approaches (Midgley 1995, 25) but has to link its services to economic development in a more dynamic way through adoption of the social development approach.

The thrust of this study is that social work practice and training in Tanzania has to and is yet to fully adopt the application of the social development approach. Thus, roles played by social workers and the adequacy of training have been assessed to ascertain their

adoption and infusion of this developmental approach in social work. Similar to opinions of Kreitzer (2012) and Mwansa (2012), the premises of the research was that current practice and training have not been responsive enough to the needs and problems of those that social work has to serve.

Social work profession

As has been stated above, the history of professional social work practice in Tanzania dates back to 1947 when it was introduced by the British colonialists. Hence, as de Jongh (1972, 72) asserts, the profession is not a product of the national development demands *per se*. Rather, it is an imposed one in order to address the perceived problems of underdevelopment by the colonialists. It continues to grow through borrowing and adaptation of the Western approaches and methods. Thus, it is not an indigenous response to conditions of the country. As already mentioned, poverty is a serious development challenge in Tanzania as well as other developing countries. However, poverty-related problems persist continue to grow, and negatively impact the lives of many despite the existence of the social work profession for over half a century now. In the light of this research and global debates on the relevance of social work in the fight against poverty, roles of social workers need to be reviewed.

Kreitzer (2012) and Mwansa (2012) traced the history and critically assessed the relevance of Western social work in the African context. It was affirmed that many social work educational programmes in Africa have not critically reflected on the cultural relevance of their curriculum in relation to the social, political, economic and spiritual aspects (Kreitzer, 2012, xvii). Poverty, as the major problem affecting clients of social workers in the developing countries such as Tanzania, is yet to be adequately addressed and mainstreamed in the training and roles of social workers. Since its inception, the dominant professional practice and educational approach have not changed. There are a number of uncovered, and hence, undocumented social work professional gaps in curbing problems of poverty. This study examines the different ways in which social work is perceived and the specific roles it is playing towards poverty reduction and the realisation of the MDGs.

Research methodology

The study adopted a mixed methods design. It used a blend of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Available literature indicates that there is limited local descriptive literature and statistical data in the social work field in Tanzania. Therefore, application of a mixed methods design would allow for generation and presentation of both quantitative as well as qualitative information on the study area. The other reason for adoption of the design was the complementary nature of the two methods. Hence, quantitative methods helped to count and measure occurrences (Burns, 1997), thus establishing the magnitude of specific issues under investigation. Some of the quantitative data included the socio-demographic information of the respondents and the level of contribution of the profession in social development, poverty reduction and the MDGs. The qualitative approach was used to capture and understand individual definitions, descriptions and meanings on

issues studied. Moreover, quantitative and qualitative methods and approaches were used in order to ensure triangulation.

Data collection was conducted between August and December 2011. The study covered five among twenty 25 regions of Tanzania. One of the covered regions is the metropolitan commercial city of Dar es Salaam. The region has the highest population size in the country. The only two social work training institutions offering a bachelor's degree in social work by then were located within this metropolitan region. Hence, it was a good representative of an urban setting. The remaining four regions (Lindi, Mtwara, Ruvuma and Iringa) are semi-urban in nature and were purposely included in order to ensure that an equal representation of rural and urban respondents was obtained. In reality, the exact parity in terms of numbers of respondents involved was not achieved due to uneven distribution of social workers and social welfare institutions between the regions. A total of 277 respondents participated in the study, including 100 social work practitioners, 35 social work employers, eight policy makers, nine social work educators, 99 third year students and 26 social work clients. Each of these categories was purposely included due to their perceived potential in appraising not only social work curricula and practice but also the contribution of the profession towards the achievement of the MDGs and social development. For instance, social workers were included because they are the implementers and main actors in the profession under study. Hence, they would offer both qualitative and quantitative data required. Educators were included due to their academic knowledge and, hence, contributions regarding the adequacy of the training and how it is or should be structured in order to help learners to effectively contribute in poverty reduction and the achievement of MDGs and social development.

Students were drawn from two selected social work training institutions, namely, the Institute of Social Work and the Open University of Tanzania. The former had a bigger population (200) of third year students while the latter had less than 50. Inclusion of both schools was purposely done to allow for comparison. Third year students were included due to the logical hypothetical perception that their theoretical as well as field practice experience would have enriched their understanding and level of analysis of the profession and its adequacy in responding to issues studied. The study also included 26 clients who participated through four focus group discussions (FGDs) and two individual interviews. Social work clients were considered a potential target group that would inform social work practice and education regarding the adequacy of the practice methods and services offered.

In the collection of data, four different sets of questionnaires were administered to social work practitioners, students, employers and educators, respectively. Interviews were conducted with employers, educators, policy makers and two clients. As already mentioned, four FGDs were held with clients of social welfare agencies.

Two steps were followed in the development of research instruments. First, the instruments were designed through teamwork. Partners from Rwanda, Kenya and Uganda, who conducted similar studies in their countries, jointly developed the questionnaires.¹

¹ The research was part of the PROSOWO project (Promotion of Professional Social Work in East Africa).

Second, the questionnaires were pretested in a large forum of Tanzanian social workers during their annual general meeting which was held from 17 to 18 August 2011. On the basis of the pretest, the tools were refined by the research team before being administered to the respondents.

The selection of organisations employing social workers was done through snowball and purposive sampling methods. A snowball method was adopted due to lack of a reliable social work database in the country. The selection of respondents from each organisation was systematically done. Depending on the size of the respective agency, a minimum of two social workers and one employer were planned for inclusion, although in practice, up to four social workers were included in agencies with many divisions and bigger numbers of social workers. Clients were selected randomly based on their convenience and readiness to participate. A total of 25 organisations were included in the study. Students were purposively selected based on their being in the final year of study. The questionnaires were self-administered.

All necessary procedures were followed to get the research clearance and conform to ethical standards of social science research. Research clearance was obtained from the Tanzanian Commission of Science and Technology and further from the regional administrative authorities when need arose. Respondents were well informed about the study and understood their right to freely participate or not.

Data analysis and presentation was done at two levels. Quantitative data was analysed and presented first. Analysis was done through a computer assisted analysis programme, namely, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 17). This enabled a bivariate analysis of variables to be done and establish relationships between different variables. Roles as well as the levels of social work contribution to poverty reduction and the achievement of the MDGs and social development were established through this approach.

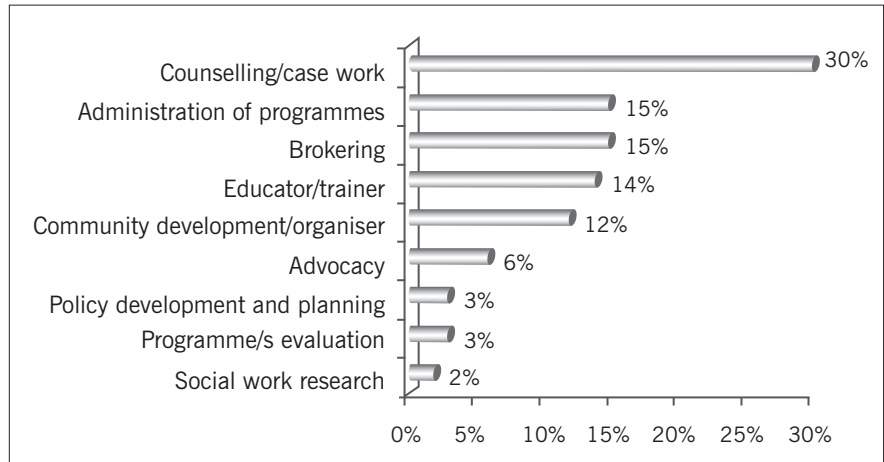
Qualitative data was analysed after the completion of the quantitative analysis. It was categorised and integrated into key thematic areas alongside the quantitative data. The general coding scheme was developed in line with the conceptual framework, theoretical assumptions, corresponding research questions and the data collected. Emerging themes and sub-themes were identified based on their level of recurrence within the data collected and in line with the key research questions. A content analysis was employed in the analysis of the qualitative data.

Views from the ground: Roles of social workers in the fight against poverty

Findings of this study confirmed that poverty is among the major problems that affect social work clients. All (100%) social work practitioners included in the study reiterated this reality. However, it was learnt that services offered and roles performed by social workers do not directly focus on eradication of poverty per se. Findings suggest that social workers strongly rely on traditional therapeutic and restorative roles rather than adopting a developmental approach which is viewed by Midgley and Conley (2010, xv) as best

suit to the needs of the developing world. Figure 17.1 displays a summary of findings regarding the dominant roles of social workers.

Figure 17.1: Major roles played by social work practitioners



Findings show that counselling and casework were the dominant roles played by social workers, followed by administration of programmes and brokering or linking clients to resources. Social workers were also engaged in education of their clients and doing community development. Since counselling is the dominant role, it is evident that developmental social work is not adequately applied. Counselling per se was challenged by some clients in the sense that it does not adequately help them to solve their underlying problem – which is poverty. They felt that counselling alone is not enough. The following sentiments by clients included in the study give important reference.

I live with HIV/AIDs. I expected to be getting assistance from the Social Welfare Department but the main challenge is that I do not get any significant financial and material assistance from them. The only assistance offered is counselling. (A female client)

Another client explained:

I need to be economically empowered. If I have the economic power, I can lead a good life.

The clients' responses seem to suggest a gap between what social workers deliver to clients and clients' expectations. The findings are in line with Kreizer's (2012) assertion that African social workers are yet to reduce their over-reliance on the Western and traditional approaches. To change this state of affairs requires not only a paradigm shift on the side of practitioners but also government commitment in ensuring adequate utilisation of the social work profession in helping clients address their dominant problem. Bailey (2012, 7) observes that social work as a profession that has enriched many lives, requires skills which are applicable in a variety of settings. Whereas it is acknowledged that social workers are also playing other developmental roles such as brokerage services, education and sensitisation, and administration of community development programmes, their level of visibility among the clientele appears limited. Thus, Tanzanian social workers need to engage more prominently in developmental social work roles and adapt methods and skills

that can be applicable in solving the most pressing challenges of poverty and deprivation in more tangible ways besides their traditional remedial roles.

Contribution of social workers in the achievement of MDGs and social development

Besides the general roles of social work practitioners, the level and specific contribution to the various MDGs was assessed. Responses of practitioners and employers regarding their level and area of contribution to specific MDGs are summarised in Tables 17.1 and 17.2.

Table 17.1: Level of contribution to MDGs by social work practitioners and employers

Type of MDG	Respondents	Level of contribution									
		Not at all		Partly		To a high extent		N/A		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	Social work practitioners	8	8	58	58	21	21	13	13	100	100.0
	Employers	17	48.6	14	40	4	11.4	-	-	35	100.0
Education	Social work practitioners	13	13	39	39	17	17	31	31	100	100.0
	Employers	9	25.7	15	42.9	9	25.7	2	5.7	35	100.0
Health	Social work practitioners	6	6	45	45	17	17	32	32	100	100.0
	Employers	16	45.7	13	37.1	4	11.4	2	5.7	35	100.0
Promote gender equality and empowerment of women	Social work practitioners	8	8	49	49	5	5	38	38	100	100.0
	Employers	23	65.7	10	28.6	2	5.7	-	-	35	100.0
Ensure environmental sustainability	Social work practitioners	17	17	30	30	2	2	51	51	100	100.0
	Employers	27	77.1	5	14.3	3	8.6	-	-	35	100.0
Develop a global partnership for development	Social work practitioners	18	18	31	31	3	3	48	48	100	100.0
	Employers	26	74.3	5	14.3	2	5.7	2	5.7	35	100.0

Table 17.2: Specific areas of contribution to the MDGs

Type of MDG	Concrete area of contribution	Employers		Social work practitioners	
		n	%	n	%
Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	Reduce poverty	15	42.9	56	56.0
	Reduce hunger	1	2.9	6	6.0
	Reduce both poverty and hunger	1	2.9	16	16.0
	N/A	18	51.4	22	22.0
	Total	35	100.0	100	100.0
Education	Achieve universal primary education	11	31.4	44	44.0
	Other educational targets	8	22.9	13	13.0
	N/A	16	45.7	43	43.0
	Total	35	100.0	100	100.0
Health	Improve maternal health	2	5.7	13	13.0
	Reduce child mortality	3	8.6	2	2.0
	Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria & other diseases	10	28.6	43	43.0
	Other health sector	-	-	6	6.0
	N/A	20	57.1	36	36.0
	Total	35	100.0	100	100.0
Gender equality and empowerment of women	Equal rights for all	3	8.6	27	27.0
	Equal opportunities for women	4	11.4	14	14.0
	Build capacities for women	3	8.6	13	13.0
	Other			1	1.0
	N/A	25	71.4	45	45.0
	Total	35	100.0	100	100.0
Ensure environmental sustainability	Protection of environmental & natural resources	5	14.3	15	15.0
	Improvement of drinking water	2	5.7	2	2.0
	Improvement of sanitation facilities	-	-	6	6.0
	Improvement of slums	-	-	6	6.0
	N/A	28	80.0	71	71.0
	Total	35	100.0	100	100.0
A global partnership for development	Networks with other agencies	5	14.3	28	28.0
	Exposure to development initiatives outside country	-	-	3	3.0
	N/A	30	85.7	69	69.0
	Total	35	100.0	100	100.0

The study findings reveal partial contribution to almost all MDGs. The dominant goal to which the majority of social workers (56%) and employers (42.9%) said they partly contributed to is eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. Social workers explained that they contribute towards poverty reduction through execution of routine roles and functions such as sensitisation, awareness raising, resource mobilisation, social services provision, advocacy, lobbying and education of individuals and families in need. The main contribution by social workers was perceived to be through their intervention in the

presented problems of clients, particularly by counselling them and helping them to either solve or cope with problems, and hence restore their functioning. However, these findings sharply differ from the perceptions of clients. Based on clients' views, poverty reduction still seems to be a neglected area by social workers. Most clients in the focus group discussions indicated that poverty is one of the major problems affecting them but not adequately addressed by social workers. The roles played by social workers are not strongly perceived as empowering to the clients. Thus, a lot still needs to be done to strengthen the contribution of social workers towards poverty reduction and the achievement of other MDGs.

Emphasising the need for change in the predominant roles played by social workers, one employer said:

Social workers should get out of their offices, go out to meet their real clients in their real environment and work with them based on evidence.

The second goal to which most social workers felt that they somehow contributed to was goal two on the achievement of universal primary education. The major contribution to the goal was through linking children who are orphans and vulnerable to schools and ensuring that they are provided the necessary educational materials and equipment. Contribution to improved health was also significant. Findings also show some level of contribution to the achievement of the health-related goals with 45% of social work practitioners stating that they partly contributed in the improvement of health, particularly through their engagement in health education and counselling programmes for pregnant mothers and youths.

With regard to gender equality and empowerment of women, less than a half (49%) of the social work practitioners stated that they "partly" contributed to achievement of this goal (see Table 17.1). This shows that the contribution of social workers in addressing gender issues is still inadequate. Less than a half (46%) of social work practitioners confirmed that mainstreaming of gender issues in their day-to-day work is done to a "small extent" only. Similarly, the majority (77.1%) of social work employers indicated that their organisations did not directly contribute towards the achievement of environmental sustainability, global partnership for development (74.3%), gender equality and empowerment of women (65.7%) and health (45.7%). The level of contribution to specific MDGs and poverty reduction, in particular, was partly influenced by the focus of the organisation's programmes, the roles the organisation assigned to social workers, and how well prepared social workers were in terms of education and training to effectively engage in developmental practice. In this regard, it is critical to appraise the social work practice roles in light of the education and training received.

Adequacy of social work training

The study explored whether social work training equips trainees with adequate skills and competencies to address the MDGs. Views of educators, social work practitioners and students were sought and a summary of the findings is presented in Table 17.3.

Table 17.3: Respondents' views on the adequacy of the training on MDGs

Description	Type of respondents	Responses	n	%
Our social work curriculum adequately prepares graduates to contribute to the achievement of the MDGs alongside other professionals.	Educators	Disagree	1	11.1
		Not sure	4	44.4
		Agree	4	44.4
		Total	9	100.0
Do you think your social work training equipped you adequately to address issues related to the MDGs?	Social work practitioners	Yes	82	82.0
		No	18	18.0
		Total	100	100.0
The social work training has equipped me with adequate knowledge about the MDGs.	Students	Strongly disagree	1	1.0
		Disagree	7	7.1
		Not sure	10	10.1
		Agree	58	58.6
		Strongly agree	21	21.2
		N/A	2	2.0
		Total	99	100.0
The social work training has adequately prepared me to contribute to the realisation of MDGs alongside other professionals.	Students	Strongly disagree	1	1.0
		Disagree	6	6.1
		Not sure	10	10.1
		Agree	44	44.4
		Strongly agree	36	36.4
		N/A	2	2.0
		Total	99	100.0

Most social work practitioners (82%) and students (59.2%) affirmed that the social work training had equipped them with the requisite knowledge and skills to contribute to the MDGs. Another 44.9% of students and 44.4% of educators agreed that the training had adequately prepared them to contribute to the realisation of the MDGs alongside other professionals. These findings suggest that social work training equips social workers with adequate knowledge and skills to address issues of poverty, including other MDGs.

Findings indicate that the curriculum of the two main social work institutions in the country, namely, the Institute of Social Work and Open University of Tanzania, prepares trainees with adequate skills and competencies to address the MDGs. The majority of social work practitioners (82%) and students (59.2%) expressed this view. However, there were different opinions among educators. Four out of nine educators said that the curriculum equipped the trainees with necessary skills to address MDGs; another four were not sure if it did; while one educator did not think that the curriculum adequately equipped students with the necessary skills to contribute towards the realisation of these goals. Despite the mixed views regarding MDGs, respondents were convinced that social work training adequately prepared trainees to handle challenges associated with poverty. Conversely, the curriculum only partly integrated global professional standards, and the social development perspective was not adequately emphasised.

Conclusion

From the foregoing findings, it is clear that social workers largely rely on traditional methods and approaches, with counselling as the dominant role played by practitioners. A general picture that emerges is that the training theoretically prepares social workers to address various social issues. Despite the level of knowledge and skills possessed by social workers on MDGs, findings reveal that the level of contribution of the profession to poverty reduction and achievement of the MDGs and social development is low. Services offered and roles played by social work practitioners are yet to make a direct contribution to poverty reduction and the achievement of the MDGs.

The Millennium Development Goals were planned to be achieved in 2015. However, this remains a hard-to-reach target for countries such as Tanzania. To accelerate the speed of change beyond the MDGs era, different professional groups have to align their roles with the “Sustainable Development Goals” (United Nations, 2012), the successor concept of the MDGs for the development agenda beyond 2015. The social work profession is not an exception. An appraisal of the professional practice in this study shows that the roles of social workers need to be reviewed and aligned to development goals. Hence, social workers in Tanzania should be more engaged in community and social development programmes and interventions in order to address clients’ problems in a more comprehensive way. They are urged to pursue roles that will also empower clients economically and address gender issues in a broader context. Their engagement in research and policy and social planning should be strengthened.

In order to make the profession more responsive to development challenges and problems, there is a need for improvements in social work curricula in order to align it to practice requirements of a more developmental orientation. Subjects such as entrepreneurship, project planning and community development need to be integrated in the social work curriculum due to their direct link to poverty reduction, the achievement of MDGs and social development. Gender should also be incorporated as a core and not elective module in the social work curriculum. At the practice level, there is a need for a readjustment of applied social work practice methods. Social workers need to engage in more outreach activities, community development and, hence, developmental work more than over-engagement with therapeutic roles. Involvement of social workers in research and policy is also recommended for sustainable and tangible contributions to social change within the country.

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Contemporary Social Work in Uganda: Towards Poverty Reduction and Social Development

Narathius Asingwire and Janestic M. Twikirize

Introduction

Uganda has a projected population of 32.9 million of which 51% are female and 49% are male and a population growth rate of 3.2% per annum (Uganda Bureau of Statistics [UBOS], 2011). The country has recorded impressive economic growth rates since the early 1990s with an average growth rate of over 6% per annum (Government of Uganda [GoU], 2007), and yet, Uganda is still ranked among the poorest countries in the world, with a Human Development Index (HDI) of only 0.422 (UNDP, 2010). Inequality is very high, with a gini-coefficient of 0.41 (GoU, 2010) and sharp disparities reflected in terms of gender, regional and rural-urban divide. Thus, the majority of Uganda's population is still trapped in poverty in both rural and urban areas. Besides income poverty, the country continues to face a number of other socioeconomic challenges, including HIV/AIDS and poor and limited provisioning of social services – all of which bring to the fore the role of social work as they do not only impact on the country's social development, but also challenge the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Social work has an important role to play in addressing some of the contemporary social issues and to proactively engage in the development process alongside other disciplines so as to contribute towards poverty reduction and the realisation of social development. Based on the study "The Role of Social Work in Poverty Reduction and the Realisation of MDGs in Uganda" (Twikirize *et al.*, 2013), this chapter presents the conceptualisation of social work, poverty and social development.¹ The chapter further unravels the empirical view on the role of contemporary social work towards poverty reduction and the attendant interventions put in place by social work agencies and practitioners to address the problem.

¹ For the methodology, the number of respondents and the study locations, see the chapter "Breaking New Grounds" by Spitzer and Twikirize in this volume.

Understanding of social work, poverty and social development

Social work

Social work is “a profession that promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being” (International Federation of Social Work [IFSW], 2012a). IFSW stresses that through the use of theories of human behaviour and social systems, social workers intervene at points where individuals interact with their environment (ibid., 2012). The Council on Social Work Education explains that the purpose of social work is the promotion of human and community well-being. The social work purpose is attained when social and economic justice is realised; when conditions that limit human rights are prevented; when poverty is eliminated; and when the quality of life of all persons is enhanced (Council on Social Work Education, 2008). Social work practice can be regarded as the professional application of social work values, principles and techniques. It is carried out in a variety of settings and targets all people without discrimination. Our study findings reveal that social work practitioners, employers and clients generally understand social work as a problem-solving profession that plays vital functions in society (Twikirize *et al.*, 2013).

According to Hepworth *et al.* (2013), the functions performed by social workers can be categorised into preventive, restorative and remedial functions. The preventive function involves “timely provision of services to vulnerable persons, promoting social functioning before the problems develop”, while the restorative function seeks “to restore functioning that has been impaired by physical or mental difficulties”, and the remedial function entails “the elimination or amelioration of existing social problems” (ibid., 6). In a similar way, social workers have protective, preventive, promotive and transformative roles to play (Devereux, 2006). Protective services focus on saving lives and offering relief from deprivation while preventive services are aimed at averting deprivation. Promotive and transformative services do not offer immediate relief and their impact can take long to materialise. For instance, promotive services are aimed at enhancing incomes and capabilities of people with interventions such as agricultural input distribution or input subsidies, or ‘conditional cash transfers’ that require beneficiaries to send their children to schools and clinics. Transformative services are aimed at addressing issues of social equity and exclusion and reducing vulnerability by transforming the socio-legal context within which livelihoods are constructed (ibid., 2006).

The functions of contemporary social work in relation to poverty reduction and the realisation of social development do not only qualify it as an eclectic discipline, but a holistic profession. The holistic focus of social work is known to be universal, although the priorities of social work vary from country to country and from time to time (IFSW, 2012a). Therefore, priorities of social work in regard to social development and poverty reduction within Uganda are somewhat unique.

Poverty

Chambers (2006) categorises poverty into four clusters, which reflect the varying understanding of the concept. The first cluster covers income poverty or consumption

poverty while another cluster considers poverty as material lack, which includes lack of or little wealth and lack of or low quality of other assets. Thirdly, poverty is understood as capability deprivation and this is related to human capabilities. The fourth cluster includes a more broadly multi-dimensional view of deprivation. It includes, among others, material lack or want and its constituents serve as mutually reinforcing dimensions. However, Chambers (2006) stresses that these categorisations are based on the viewpoint of scholars and not necessarily the views of the poor people, thereby introducing a fifth cluster, which is the multiplicity meaning of poverty identified by the poor themselves. Our study (Twikirize *et al.*, 2013) elicited the views of social work practitioners and other participants on the different manifestations of poverty in the communities in Uganda. In general, poverty was understood as the inability to meet one's basic needs such as food, clothing, housing, hygiene, and basic services such as medical care and education.

A poor person cannot provide for the basic needs or does not have any one to run to and get help. Sometimes you may have someone but this person is not able to help you. (Male FGD participant, Bugiri District)

Both practitioners and clients interacted with described non-material descriptions of poverty such as those of spiritual aspects; they associated poverty with lack of reverence for God, which they considered to be graver than simply lack of money. Accordingly, lack of friends (in clients' responses) as a form of poverty brings out issues of isolation as described by Chambers (1983) in his "deprivation trap". Some social work practitioners in the study attached a time element to the poverty problem as they described it as an inability to meet basic needs "in a required time"; living in a deprived state for "extended periods of time"; and inability to "sustain one's lifestyle". This dimension of poverty portrays the relative nature of poverty at individual and family level.

Poverty is when you ... don't have peace of mind and cannot influence anything around you. Poverty is when one does not know God, has no love and does not have friends. (Male FGD participant, Mbarara District)

In-depth analysis of the participants' responses reveals differences in poverty perceptions by gender and locality. Most of the female participants defined poverty as lack of access to essential provisions such as food, clothing, health and education. The female study participants were quick to point out widowhood and lack of children in their definition of poverty, compared to males. What was peculiar to male participants was their linkage of poverty to family break-up arising out of the inability to provide for one's household. Male respondents tended to associate poverty with laziness more than their female counterparts. From the study findings there was consensus between male and female participants in associating poverty with lack of money and employment opportunities.

Perceptions of how poverty manifests differed based on locality. Most respondents in the urban communities associated poverty with difficulty in accessing decent housing, unemployment, and inability to own land or build a house. Conversely, the majority of rural groups identified poverty with lack of land for farming, for the majority rural dwellers depend on land for their livelihood. The point of convergence between rural and urban

participants on the manifestation of poverty was the inability by individuals and families to meet their basic household needs.

Social development

In social work literature, the concept of social development is prominently referred to as the developmental perspective in social work (Midgley, 1995). It is a broader interdisciplinary field that involves “a process of planned social change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole in conjunction with a dynamic process of economic development” (ibid., 25). Central to the social development concept is the link between human well-being and economic development; thus, in a way development having a social recognition. Midgley (1997) explains that for such to emerge, there should be policies and programmes that enhance people’s welfare and at the same time contribute positively to economic development. Dominelli (1997, 1) in a related manner explains social development as “a dynamic way of organizing resources and human interactions to create opportunities through which the potential of all people; individually and collectively can be developed to the full”.

Contemporary social work is central in social development as it is charged with the development of people’s welfare. In this quest, social workers employ two approaches, namely the maintenance and the liberationist approaches. The maintenance approach aims at helping people adjust better to the existing situation while the liberationist approach seeks to challenge the existing status quo and develop progressive alternatives (Dominelli, 1997). Dominelli asserts that the liberationist approach is most relevant to social development since it enables individuals to redefine their position and experience change in existing distribution of power and resources.

Social development thus seeks empowering rather than remedial solutions that originally defined social work as a profession. Key indicators of social development include levels of income, employment, educational attainment, access to health care and the health status of the population, and availability and access to social protection for vulnerable groups. Social development occurs variously through human capital formation and mobilisation, asset accumulation and investment, employment creation and micro-enterprise in poor communities (Midgley, 1995). This has implications on the specific roles social workers can play, alongside other professionals, to contribute to social development. In recent years, there have been renewed calls to bolster social work’s focus on social development through emphasis on developmental social work both at curriculum and practice levels (Kabadaki, 1995; Midgley, 1995; Mupedziswa, 2001; Hochfeld *et al.*, 2009).

Gray (1996) sheds light on what constitutes developmental social work practice. The author asserts that developmental social work focuses on poverty alleviation and also works towards social inclusion, thus empowering people to take control of their own lives. It is also highlighted that developmental social workers operate from a strengths perspective, thus focusing on human resourcefulness, passion, energy, intelligence, imagination, curiosity and creativity. Developmental social work further implies political participation where social workers implement, analyse, comment, influence and generally work towards

making policies just and meaningful (Gray, 1996). Developmental social workers apply an inductive approach to policy practice, involve themselves in consultation, do casework, facilitate group work models, engage in social entrepreneurship and in partnership development, and also prefer participatory action research approaches (*ibid.*).

The understanding of social development by social work practitioners and clients captured in the study was similar in several ways. There was universal agreement among employers of social workers that social development is the best approach that focuses on empowerment and capacity-building. Practitioners contended that social development is concerned with empowerment and capacity-building, identifying and harnessing strengths of systems, building systems and institutions to handle problems and deliver services.

You look at one's economic life, you look at someone's educational level, health... You have a programme which covers all the types of development that can improve both the lives of the individual and other types of development. (Practitioner/educator, Bugema University)

Study participants described social development as a process of investing in the people; and the need to make laws and policies that protect the people. The approach was described further as involving an analysis of how economic gains at the national level have benefited the people in terms of standards of living as reflected in education, health, security, politics, freedom of expression, nutrition, and the entire quality of life of the individual.

Both practitioners and employers contended that development cannot be achieved by giving people money and other handouts but through services and resources including loans for the attainment of individual and community self-reliance. Community organisation activities, whereby people are encouraged to form groups purposely to tap into opportunities and services initiated by government and other development organisations, were considered key dimensions of social development.

The issue of handouts should be stopped save for a few specific categories of the population; the very vulnerable, the elderly, the sick, orphans and so on. But this should also be on a short-term basis. I think with time, if we go for the sustainable approach of empowering by giving knowledge, skills and tools, the practice of giving handouts should completely be phased out. (Employer, UWESO Kampala)

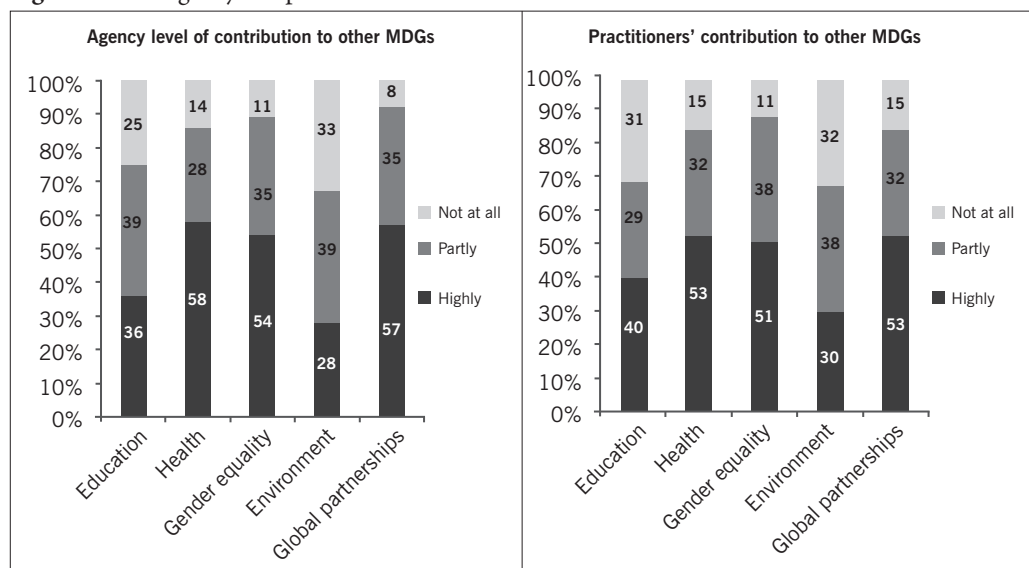
To reduce poverty and achieve social development, it was argued by the research participants that the focus should be on capacity-building, social and economic empowerment. In all, participants in the study perceived social development as the right approach to reducing poverty as it empowers people by giving them knowledge and skills as well as opportunities to engage in gainful employment.

Contribution of contemporary social work to poverty reduction and social development: An empirical view

The contribution of contemporary social work to poverty reduction and other MDGs is embedded in what agencies and practitioners do. Study findings revealed that agencies' and practitioners' contribution to social development and the MDGs such as education,

health, gender equality and empowerment of women, environmental sustainability and a global partnership for development are varied as shown in Figure 18.1.

Figure 18.1: Agency and practitioners' level of contribution to other MDGs



Source: Field data

The highest contribution by both employers and social work practitioners was recorded in the areas of health, gender equality and building global partnerships for development. The similarity in the pattern of the responses by employers and practitioners is rather striking and serves to corroborate the levels of contemporary social work contribution to the different poverty reduction, social development and other components of the MDGs.

Twikirize *et al.* (2013) revealed that poverty regardless of its understanding was the main problem mentioned by the clients as affecting them the most. Social work practitioners positively assessed their contribution to poverty reduction. Most (64%) social work practitioners noted that they focused their efforts on approaches and strategies which were theoretically considered effective in fighting poverty. However, less than a half of the individual practitioners considered their contribution towards poverty reduction and realisation of social development goals as significant, with 43% assessing their actual contribution as only partly addressing the core aspects of poverty. Practitioners attributed their limited contribution to their role being highly dependent on the agencies' policies and programmes' focus. Furthermore, less than a half (47.5%) of the social work practitioners were reportedly involved in doing some research at the agency level whose contribution to addressing poverty and other related MDGs remains empirically unascertained partly due to limited awareness of MDGs by both social work practitioners and employers. This implies that the starting point to enhance the role of social work in poverty reduction is by making an entry into influencing agencies' policy and programming so that the bulk of interventions are geared towards long-term achievement of social development.

From the MDGs perspective, interventions to reduce poverty and hunger go hand-in-hand since the two reinforce each other. In this regard, the majority of the agencies (63%) and 66% of individual practitioners reported involvement in both the reduction of poverty and hunger. Slightly over a third (34%) of agencies and 29% of practitioners stated only poverty eradication as their concrete area of involvement. The agencies involved in reduction of hunger *per se* were especially linked to relief services, which contribute less to long-term social development but are nonetheless essential. Some of the specific tasks by social work practitioners included: championing the design and implementation of appropriate poverty reduction interventions; building skills of other professions to support poverty reduction; research into appropriate and effective models that can reduce poverty and hunger, especially among the rural poor; policy analysis to distil appropriate responses to poverty; working with development partners to influence appropriate resource allocation; and promotion of a culture of saving among the communities by, for example, facilitating the formation of savings and credit societies.

As part of their contributions to social development, social work agencies and practitioners were found to be involved in the education sector directly or indirectly. The most prominent area of involvement (up to 62% of the respondents) was revealed as agencies' support for universal primary education (UPE) through provision of scholastic materials. Individual practitioners, as part of their functions or on their own, are involved in community sensitisation regarding the importance of sending children to school. Through this role, social workers contribute to influence the attitudes of parents concerning their responsibilities in the implementation of UPE.

You can imagine that a parent would not send a child to school because he thinks that it is government responsibility. And we are still fighting that, struggling to change that type of attitude. (Social work practitioner, Build Africa Uganda, Kampala)

What was evident from the study was the minimal social work intervention in school settings, where other pertinent issues that affect children's education could be addressed. Promoting the involvement of professional social workers in school settings can generate long-term benefits on retention, performance and other educational outcomes for children, which in turn positively contribute to overall social development outcomes.

Social workers have extended their spheres of contributing towards poverty reduction and realisation of social development through promotion of gender equality. Over a half (52%) of the practitioners mentioned the promotion of equal rights as the area to which they are making a contribution. The second highest area of involvement was the promotion of equal opportunities and capacity-building for women. Some of the social work practitioners argued that in promoting gender equality, interventions should transcend advocacy for equality of rights to identification and enhancement of women's capacities and assets, which was termed as 'woman power'.

Instead of emphasising women's rights all the time, woman power should be emphasised, e.g. power to sustain their families, power to lead society. (Social work practitioner, Gulu district)

Social work clients also tended to support interventions for empowerment through building the capacities of women as well as enhancing their self-esteem.

Social workers should build the capacity and esteem of women and young girls to believe in themselves – that they can perform the same tasks as men do. (Female FGD participant, Kampala)

Through their roles in community development, specifically among vulnerable groups of women and men, and through other remedial roles such as counselling, there is no doubt that social workers are playing a significant role in promoting gender equality, which is an indispensable aspect of social development.

Apart from gender equality, the study identified other key social work interventions areas, including making a contribution in reduction of child mortality, maternal mortality and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. The study results indicate that most of the interventions are in the area of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, with 54% of practitioners citing this as their specific area of involvement. HIV/AIDS has attracted immense response from several social work agencies since the 1990s, explaining the visibility of social work in this particular MDG.

As much as contemporary social work is more visible in the area of education and health in Uganda, there are critical areas, including a focus on environment, that are yet to come to the fore. In our study, for instance, environmental sustainability received the lowest attention by agencies and subsequently social work practitioners. The few who reported some contribution were mainly involved in the protection of the natural environmental resources and improvement of sanitation, respectively. Lately, social work's involvement in environmental issues is gaining ground as a crucial practice area for social work. Dominelli (2012, 8) uses the term "green social work", which she defines as:

...that part of practice that intervenes to protect the environment and enhance people's wellbeing, by integrating the interdependencies between people and their socio-cultural, economic and physical environment, and among peoples within an egalitarian framework that addresses the structural inequalities and unequal distribution of power and resources.

Specific social work interventions targeting poverty reduction and social development

Several poverty reduction interventions employed by contemporary social work practitioners and agencies were identified in the study. These interventions address several factors associated with poverty at the individual, household and community levels. The identified interventions range from support of income-generating activities, resource mobilisation, child education, capacity-building, education, community organisation and advocacy. Encouraging and supporting individuals as well as households to start income-generating activities (IGAs) featured a prominent intervention supported by social work agencies. Over a half (52%) of practitioners identified IGAs and resource mobilisation at the community level as a priority intervention for poverty reduction and the achievement of social development. The intervention targets the underlying problem of lack of employment or under-employment, and the resultant lack of income. Entire communities and also specific vulnerable groups such as women, youths, the elderly, refugees, and orphans and other vulnerable children tend to be targets. Some of the IGAs introduced

and taken up by individuals, households and social groups included animal husbandry (piggery, poultry keeping, goats and cattle keeping) and other small-scale businesses. The IGAs are used as springboards for resource mobilisation, which is one of the roles that social work agencies and practitioners play.

Resource mobilisation and provision involve two distinct approaches; remedial and developmental. The former involves giving relief assistance in the form of food, accommodation and medical care to vulnerable social groups, while the latter entails agencies providing grants, improved seeds and animals. As a form of resource mobilisation and provision, some social work agencies encourage clients to save and access microfinance loans for investment in productive ventures. Thus, social workers play a brokering role by linking people to resources and technical services such as those of extension workers within and outside their communities. Through brokerage, information sharing, community organisation and group work, social workers are actively engaged in capacity-building and the socioeconomic empowerment of vulnerable groups and communities.

Capacity-building as a function played by contemporary social work targets the underlying problem of limited practical knowledge and skills in production processes, as well as powerlessness. Capacity-building efforts discerned in this study largely involve training and providing information to entire communities and specific vulnerable social groups. Educational interventions in the form of support to child education at primary and secondary education levels target children who otherwise would not have the opportunity to live decent lives in the future. It was noted that this strategy reduces the burden of care and expenditures of poor families, thus freeing the limited resources to meet their basic needs. The benefits of such interventions are poverty reduction-related, and with proper community organisation can lead to social development in the long-run.

Community organisation as an intervention by social work practitioners involves mobilising people with similar problems or concerns to form groups purposely for pooling resources and power as well as sharing ideas for problem-solving and development. Community-based groups and associations were perceived a potent force for pulling people out of poverty as they support each other and get linked to government programmes and non-governmental organisations more easily than if they worked alone. It was noted that by enabling individuals to belong to groups, positive attitudes are inculcated among members, including the building of work ethics among community members. Through group practices such as thriftiness in spending, negative attitudes are discouraged and instead good ones such as savings and hard work are encouraged. In this regard, social workers inculcate work ethics in the communities for poverty reduction. Study participants also revealed other unintended benefits associated with groups, which promote harmonious relationships in families that in turn encourage productivity. Furthermore, issues of domestic violence, gender inequalities and injustices which disintegrate families were increasingly being handled and addressed by social workers in group situations.

Other social work interventions revealed by the study include promotion of good health. Social workers largely reported providing information on health issues to communities and specific groups, particularly regarding HIV/AIDS, prevention of malaria, blindness, and sanitation and hygiene-related diseases. Social workers sensitise communities about

existing services and opportunities and encourage them to utilise them. Social workers also encourage people to create their own services on a self-help basis. This implies another role of social workers as community organisers. Health is a significant aspect of social development and conversely there is a strong link between ill health and poverty. As such, the prominent role that social work is playing in Uganda's health sector is commendable. As a matter of fact, besides community development, the health sector employed the second highest number of professional social workers in the country.

Discussion

The contribution of contemporary social work towards poverty reduction and social development reflects the utmost purpose of the profession in promoting human and community well-being. The attainment of all these in a resource-poor country such as Uganda poses daunting challenges, even though visible progression was pointed out by the study (Twikirize *et al.*, 2013). Social and economic injustices, conditions limiting human rights, existence of poverty, poor quality of life still exist amidst contemporary social work interventions that attempt to target such conditions. The role of social work practice towards social development and poverty reduction unravels the fact that practitioners and agencies engage more in preventive and restorative functions than remedial functions. In broader terms, social workers are more involved in the provision of services to vulnerable persons and promoting social functioning before problems develop.

The different roles thus taken up by social workers in Uganda fit well in the categorisation by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW, 2012b), namely, community development and community practice. The adoption of community development and community practice by social workers represent not only a dimension of planned social change to promote the well-being of the population as a whole but also yet another dimension of a dynamic process of economic development (Midgley, 1995). Community development and community practice aspects emphasise human well-being. The community development aspect, however, goes further to bring on board issues of economic development. In general, contemporary social work interventions that are revealed in this study focus on poverty alleviation and social inclusion; adopt a strengths perspective; use asset-based community development; involve political participation; and also employ an inductive approach.

Conclusion

From the theoretical and empirical understanding of poverty, it can be noted that in specific terms, contemporary social work practice targets poverty alleviation especially among the most vulnerable populations in Uganda. The setback with regard to social workers' contribution to poverty reduction and realisation of social development in Uganda lies in their limited involvement with policy formulation and advocacy. This limitation notwithstanding, a synthesis of the study findings leads to the conclusion that contemporary social work plays a critical role in addressing poverty through empowering the disadvantaged and enhancing the capacity of clients and individuals to realise their innate potential and hence contributing to the realisation of social development. The

interventions to address poverty and to ensure social development entail building on the capacities, experiences and potentials of the served clientele, and recognising their point of view and respecting their priorities.

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Land Issues in Rwanda: Gender Perspectives and Social Work Implications

Jeannette Bayisenge

Introduction

An understanding of land issues from a gender perspective stresses the effect of gender in determining who owns and controls land in customary societies. Women have been more discriminated against than men when it comes to the rights of access to and control over land. The role of social workers could be vital in ensuring respect of women's human rights and social justice.

Land rights for women gained global visibility following the statement which was made during the UN Women's Conference in Copenhagen in 1980, that although women perform two-thirds of the work in the world, they receive only 10% of the income and own less than 1% of the world's resources, while constituting 50% of the world's population (Rao, 2007; Mapp, 2011). Since then, the questioning of the exclusion of women from ownership of the world's resources, including land, increased, and legal reform sought to change this position.

Generally, the main aim of legal land reforms is the registration and titling of land. The goal of land titling is to transform customary tenure into freehold tenure by registering land parcels to an individual and then issuing a title. This person, in the majority of cases in African contexts, has been the male head of the household (Lastarria-Cornhiel, 1997). Gender specialists, feminist lawyers and international organisations have discussed the pros and cons of Land Tenure Reforms (LTR) (Deininger and Feder, 2009) to women's land claims. In their analysis they have presented controversial standpoints.

For different reasons, women activists, feminist researchers and many international organisations such as the World Bank (WB), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) have continued to put greater faith in legal reforms. In this regard, these organisations have expanded their programmes and activities in LTR in developing countries, including many African countries.

The aim of this chapter is to explore gender aspects of land rights in Rwanda, by focusing more on the effect of the ongoing LTR on women and what role social workers could play in this process. This chapter reports some of the empirical data collected during a

study carried out in the district of Musanze in the Northern Province of Rwanda between 2011 and 2012 (Bayisenge, forthcoming; Bayisenge, Hojer and Espling, forthcoming). It entailed a household survey with 480 women from different backgrounds, semi-structured interviews with LTR implementers at different levels,¹ coordinators of National Women's Council and focus group discussions with local land committees, *abunzi*² (local mediators), and women's associations. The study gathered a wide range of information regarding women's land rights issues in the context of land tenure reforms in Rwanda, but in this chapter emphasis is put on challenges encountered and the role that social workers could play.

This chapter first briefly explores the links between the concepts of land rights, access to, use, control over land and gender, followed by a further exploration of land issues in Rwanda from a gender perspective. The subsequent section looks at LTR and its effects on women. Finally, the challenges that women face in ensuring their rights and the role social workers could play in this struggle are discussed.

Land rights and gender: Some conceptual links

Land rights or land claims, access to, and use and control over land are some of the concepts that appear most in literature related to land issues. They can have several meanings and, hence, it is conceptually useful to clarify their use in this chapter. Agarwal (1994, 1959) defines rights "as claims that are legally and socially recognized and enforceable by an external legitimized authority, be it a village-level institution or some higher level judicial or executive body of the State". The author further states that land rights could be in the form of ownership or of usufruct (the legal right to use and enjoy the advantages or profits of another person's property) associated with differing degrees of freedom to lease out, mortgage, bequeath, or sell. When talking about land rights, it is always worth remembering that there are different ways of acquiring land as well as using it (Jackson, 2003). Rights in the context of land may also have a temporal and sometimes locational dimension. A person may be given a piece of land to use because he or she resides in the area, and the rights to this land are terminated when he or she leaves the area.

The concept 'access to land' is often used paralleled or connected to the concept 'control over land'. As Agarwal (1994) argues, access can be through rights of ownership and use, but it can also be through informal acquisitions granted by individuals to relatives or friends. However, the author further explains that most of the time it is difficult for the person having access to land to call for its enforcement. In addition, Lastarria-Cornhiel (1997) asserts that access to land simply means that a person is able to make use of the land. Access rights, thus, do not necessarily include ownership or possession, power of

¹ According to the Organic Law No 29/2005 of 31/12/2005 determining the administrative entities, the Republic of Rwanda is divided into 4 Provinces (Intara) and the City of Kigali, 30 Districts (Uturere), 416 Sectors (Imirenge), 2,015 Cells (Utugari) and 14,575 Villages (Imidigudu) (MINALOC, 2013).

² *Abunzi* are the local level mediators with responsibility for dispute resolution in Rwanda. They are governed by the Organic law No 31/2006 of 14/08/2006 on organisation, jurisdiction, competence and functioning of the Mediation Committee and have jurisdiction in the first instance for civil cases relating to land related conflict and other immovable assets and breach of contract disputes (see Vildman and Lankhorst, 2011).

control and transfer but usually include some decision-making power over the production process, products, and use of that land.

In the struggle of women claiming rights to land, the concept of control is very significant. Control over land can have several meanings, such as the ability to decide how the land is used; how its produce is disposed of; and whether it can be leased out, mortgaged, bequeathed or sold (Agarwal, 1994). According to Lastarria-Cornhiel (1997, 1318), control of land can be defined as “the command an individual has over a particular piece of land and the benefits that derive from that land”. Agarwal (1994) points out that the advantage of property stems not only from ownership, but also from effective control over it. However, in most societies today, wealth-generating property, whether privately owned or not, is controlled by men (Rao, 2007). Consequently, those who own such property can directly or indirectly control the institutions that enact and implement laws, and those that shape ideology.

Strengthening women’s land rights: Some theoretical considerations

Gender specialists, feminist lawyers and international organisations have presented controversial standpoints about the effect of statutory and customary laws on women’s lands claims. The supporters of statutory law continue to advocate legal reform as a way forward to ensure land rights for women. They advocate women’s land and property rights to be enshrined in statutory law (Whitehead and Tsikata, 2003). This group has a generally positive stance towards the role of the state and statutory law to deliver rights to women. In their approaches to women and land, the most common view is that legally backed land ownership is critical to rural women’s production and economic efficiency (ibid.). Although the data is scattered and should always be contextualised, some researchers have asserted that land titles given to women have increased their bargaining power in some countries such as Ethiopia, Peru, Nepal and some parts of India (Deininger and Feder, 2009). Agarwal (2003) asserts that joint and sole land titles given to women are good for efficiency, welfare, equity and empowerment.

Although some feminist researchers consider the legal reform in the interest of women rights, they also recognise that it has some limitations. World Bank, FAO and IFAD (2009), McAuslan (2010), Veldman and Lankhorst (2011), and USAID (2013) argue that while the reform may be gender-sensitive in its provisions, its enforcement can be a problem due to factors such as lack of awareness, male resistance, justice that is often inaccessible and costly, lack of political will on the part of governments, as well as social and cultural norms. As Jackson (2003) argues, the ownership of assets confers power to women if they can secure cultural interpretation of this ownership as legitimate and appropriate. If not, a social disapproval may mitigate the advantages of the land titles issued to women. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that when equitable land laws are adopted and land titles issued to women, it is not a guarantee that women will automatically claim their rights or enjoy the benefits coming with them.

Voices opposing faith in LTR claim that some of the poorest and most vulnerable farmers, many of whom are women who customarily have had access to land, may become the losers through these programmes (Razavi, 2003; Musahara and Huggins, 2004; Des

Forges, 2006). However, it is important not to homogenise women as a social group (Whitehead and Tsikata, 2003) because a few women make profit from these reforms (Reichert, 2011). As not all the aspects of customary systems are prejudicial to women's land rights, this chapter builds on a merging consensus that calls for complementarity between customary and formal land tenure systems. The idea here is to base all the changes in laws and policies on protective aspects of customary tenure systems instead of ignoring them altogether.

Background on women's access to land in Rwanda

According to the Rwandese customary system, land was inherited by sons from fathers. Women's land rights were guaranteed by men because women were dependent upon the men in their families, managed and also protected by their fathers, their husbands or their male children (Burnet and RISD, 2001). Women have had different ways to get access to land, and marriage was considered as one of the important sources of women's land rights (Lastarria-Cornhiel, 1997). In their studies, Republic of Rwanda (2004), Musahara (2006), and Daley, Dore-Weeks and Umuhiza (2010) report that when a woman was married, she automatically gained access to her husband's fields to cultivate for him, their children and herself. If or when her husband died, a widow remained on the husband's land, holding it in trust for her male children. She could not take over the full rights to the household land; she could make use of the land as long as she stayed with her husband's family. She possessed usufruct rights over the land until her sons were mature enough to manage the family property. If she had no sons, the brothers of her late husband could take over the land. If a man died while his wife was still within her reproductive years, levirate marriage (a brother of the deceased husband marrying the widow) could be practised. If there were no children, a widow most often returned to her own family in the hopes of marrying again.

There were other provisions through which women could gain access to land. They could get land from the husband's kin groups, their own families as well as the wider circle of social ties through loan or gift. In many regions of Rwanda, traditional customs such as *urwibutso*³ (a woman, married or not, could at times receive land as a gift from her elderly father), *inkuri* (a married woman would often receive a gift of land when she presented a newborn baby to her father's family) and *intekeshwa* (a newly-wed girl could receive a gift of land from her parents when they came to help her get used to her new home following her wedding ceremony) provided safety nets for women (Burnet and RISD, 2001; Musahara, 2006).

According to the National Land Policy (Republic of Rwanda, 2004) and the report of MINITERE, DFID and HTSPE (2007), other forms of access to land existed for women in the form of temporary user rights over land (*ingaligali*) held by their fathers' patrilineage. For example, a daughter rejected by her husband (*indushyi*) or his family could be given a portion of land. Similarly, a woman who never married and did not bear children could also receive an allocation of land from the lineage's holdings. This piece of land was controlled

³ All terms referred to in italics are Kinyarwanda.

by the lineage chief who was supposed to permit access to it in the interests of the entire lineage. Therefore, a woman would have access to it as long as she was deemed in need, if necessary, for life (Burnet and RISD, 2001; Pottier, 2006).

The problem in all this is that women may get access to land through many social relations as wives, and they mostly have usufruct rights but not the capacity to control land (Agarwal, 2004; Daley, Dore-Weeks and Umuhoza, 2010). Consequently, these rights become insecure when family ties break such as in case of divorce, death and separation (Lastarria-Cornhiel, 1997; Whitehead and Tsikata, 2003; Jackson, 2003). Additionally, nowadays, evidence suggests that different forms from which women used to have access to land are now largely inoperable because of land scarcity (Musahara and Huggins, 2004; Budlender and Alma, 2011).

The need for women to have access to land is more prominent than ever before. Generally, access to land is crucial for all Rwandans as 71.7% of the population depend on agriculture for their livelihoods (NISR, 2012). Furthermore, it is especially so for women as 82% currently work in the agriculture sector compared with 61% of men (NISR, 2012). The problem of gendered unequal access to land has been exacerbated by an increasing number of vulnerable populations (widows, orphans, women whose husbands are in prisons) due to the realities of the post-1994 genocide and many other factors, including population pressure, leading to severe scarcity of land (Burnet and RISD, 2001). According to the National Gender Statistics Report (NISR, 2013), one-third of women in Rwanda are heads of households. NISR (2012) reports that almost 90% of female heads of households work in the agriculture sector compared with 62% of male heads. Women seek to support themselves and their families in an environment of general land pressure and land insecurity, while at the same time facing customary restrictions on holding land. The Rwandan government initiated a Land Tenure Reform (LTR) as one of the strategies to deal with this problem.

Land reform in Rwanda

The ongoing LTR in Rwanda comprises a number of main activities including the implementation of the new policy and legal framework; regularisation of land tenure through land registration; and titling as well as the establishment of land management organisations (MINITERE, DFID and HTSPE, 2007). Without ignoring the interconnection of those activities, the study has focused on land registration and titling. This is the main component of LTR in Rwanda and consists of the process of recording and disseminating information about the ownership, value and use of land (Republic of Rwanda, 2004; Van Der Molen, 2006). This reform constitutes the wider national and global policy agenda of formalising land tenure as a strategy to promote economic development in developing countries by international economic institutions. In this regard, formalisation of land tenure systems is in progress in different African countries with the aim of developing accountable, decentralised systems of land administration which will deliver land rights to people, and measures to promote change in social values towards gender equality (Quan, Tan and Toulmin, 2004). Many of these reforms relate to

land tenure in general and some include gender equality among their objectives or address gender-related issues directly (Budlender and Alma, 2011).

The Rwandan government initiated the land registration and titling programme in 2006. A set of laws, orders, legal and institutional frameworks were developed in order to enable its implementation and establish a better land coordination (Daley, Dore-Weeks and Umuhoza, 2010). The four core documents that comprise the new body of land policy and laws in Rwanda are: the Inheritance and Marital Property Law of 1999; the Rwandan Constitution of 2003; the National Land Policy of 2004; and the Organic Land Law of 2005. The Inheritance and Marital Property Law of 1999 grants equal inheritance rights to all children without any discrimination between male and female children. This law also gives rights of succession on the matrimonial land to married women under the regime of community property as explained in articles 43 and 50. In Rwanda, there are three matrimonial regimes: community of property, limited community of acquests and separation of property (Republic of Rwanda, 1999; Laurel, 2004; Polavarapu, 2011). Similarly, the Organic Land Law of 2005 determines the use and management of land in Rwanda and gives equal rights over land to the husband and wife and prohibits any discrimination based on sex in matters relating to ownership or possession of land. The two other main documents are the Rwandan Constitution of 2003 and The National Land Policy. Besides, a National Land Centre, Provincial and District land bureaux and an Office of the Registrar of Land Titles have been established to ensure the overall coordination, administration and management of land (Republic of Rwanda, 2008).

However, these laws have limitations as they only protect women in registered monogamous marriages. They refer to the article 26 of the Rwandan Constitution that recognises only civil monogamous marriage between a man and a woman. Therefore, the rights of a non-negligible number of women living in polygamous marriages and consensual relationships are virtually not protected. According to Brown and Uvuza (2006), living in a consensual union does not confer any rights on either member of the couple, nor do religious or traditional marriage ceremonies. Land rights of women in Rwanda vary greatly depending on whether their marriage has legal status and this variation in status determines whether a woman has any rights to land that she accessed during the relationship in case of separation, divorce or widowhood.

Women's access to land under the land registration and titling programme in Rwanda

The following sections present some of the findings collected from the study mentioned in the introduction of this chapter. The findings showed that land registration and titling have increased rights of access to land for women, as the rule was joint title for all registered couples under community property regime. It is well mentioned on land certificates with joint title that the land the couple owns is equally shared, where each partner gets 50% of the total size and their two signatures are required. However, land laws do not protect women whose marriages are not registered. Many of such women in polygamous marriages have enjoyed independent titles when the extended family and neighbours recognised them as part of the family and especially if they have children. Therefore, land rights for

unregistered wives depend on the goodness of the extended family except when they have a piece of land that they claim to be their own property.

The rights of control over land for women of all marital status, whether registered or not, in monogamous or polygamous relationships, are questionable. This is confirmed by the respondents from the study. They mentioned that nowadays it is not easy for a married man to alone make crucial decisions concerning the use of land like selling it, giving it as a gift, or mortgaging it without his wife's consent. Article 50 of the Organic Land Law 2005 requires the consent of both spouses in order to take such decisions. However, when it comes to daily management of land and the harvest, nothing much has changed at this level. So, having 50% of the share of the land and the level of decision-making within households do not correlate. During the discussion with a female group of *abunzi* (local level mediators), participants said that although women hold 50% of the land, many of them still think that all land belongs to their husbands and that the husband should take the last decision. As mentioned in the previous sections, legal ownership of land may be accompanied by legal restrictions or social constraints (World Bank, FAO and IFAD, 2009, McAuslan, 2010). The latter stem mainly from beliefs and norms that value male domination, and this chapter reveals that in practice these norms are still very strong which has led to some challenges when it comes to ensuring land rights for women. The main practices are discussed in the section below.

Polygamy

Polygamy is defined as “the fact that one person marries a second spouse while the marriage with the first one is still valid” (Republic of Rwanda, 2008, 4). It was reported as the first challenge the implementers met during the land registration and titling process. In polygamy, the man may marry one or more wives besides the registered wives or sometimes none of the wives is registered. Our study findings (Bayisenge, Hojer and Espling, forthcoming) reveal that 14.7% of respondents live in polygamous relationships. Customarily, this was accepted although it was not supported by the law. In that case, each woman had her own property to enable her to raise her children. All participants in the study asserted that when there is more than one wife in a family, this is a precondition of possible misunderstanding regarding land sharing.

Ubushoreke

It was reported that these days, polygamy is not as serious as *ubushoreke*. The 2009 Law on Prevention and Punishment of Gender-based Violence in its article 2 translates *ubushoreke* as concubinage and defines it as “the fact that two people live permanently as if they were spouses though they are not married while one of them is legally married”. Now that the Government of Rwanda took measures to banish polygamy and *ubushoreke* with serious penalties⁴, respondents said that the situation was becoming complicated for registered

⁴ The Law n°59/2008 of 10/09/2008 on prevention and punishment of gender-based violence foresees the following penalties for any person involved in polygamy and concubinage. *Penalty for concubinage* (Art. 21): Any person guilty of concubinage shall be liable to imprisonment of two (2) years to four (4) years and a fine between one 100,000 to 200,000 Rwandan francs. These penalties shall apply to any person accepting to become a concubine. *Penalty for polygamy* (Art. 22): Any person guilty of getting married

women. Men secretly continue to have concubines. Since they cannot officially marry their concubines or give them property to raise children they may have with them, as it is the case with polygamy, they bring those children to the recognised registered wives. The latter complained that they take contraceptives to have fewer children in order to raise them decently, but their husbands come with other children born out of *ubushoreke*.

Some women blamed the law that allows men to recognise children born out of wedlock as legitimate because they automatically become heirs as children of the registered wife. Men do not only bring those children to their main home but there are also cases where they give to their concubines the plots that they usually share equally with the registered wife without her consent. Although the wives with legal status have the right to report this to the authorities, they sometimes become tired of going to court so often and drop the cases.

Inheritance

The study reported two different challenges with the 1999 Inheritance Law. Firstly, the local population has limited knowledge on what this law says. Almost all respondents and participants in the study know that girls and boys should equally share their parents' property, and that a wife may inherit land both from her birth family and from her husband's family. But they do not know the details on how this is done and to whom the law is effective. Secondly, some respondents including women themselves, disagree with the provision of the law and have difficulties putting into practice even the little they know. They do not understand how a girl or a married woman should share land equally with her brothers. Nearly 25% of the respondents do not support equal sharing between girls and boys and believe that boys should have bigger share.

On the one hand, conflicts are mainly raised when daughters who are already married come back to their families to claim their share when their parents die. On the other hand, conflicts arise between widows and their in-laws, especially if they do not bear children or if they start having children with other men after the death of their husbands. Furthermore, study findings reveal that some men have become greedy and prefer to marry girls who have got a share of land from their families or threaten their wives to go back and get their share.

Unwillingness of men to regularise their marriages

The non-registration of marriage is a challenge that was reported in this study. This is very common in young couples and in polygamous marriages. Some reasons have been connected to this behaviour such as reluctance of men to share their property with their wives, because if they register their marriage, automatically the wives have rights to an equal share of the property. Another reason is that men say that they need time to judge the behaviour of their partner as registering marriage may be *ukwizirikaho igisasu* ("tying a bomb on your body", an expression they use when referring to the registration

while there still exists a valid marriage contract between him/her and someone else shall be liable to imprisonment of three (3) years to five (5) years and a fine between 300,000 and 500,000 Rwandan francs. These penalties shall apply to any person who accepts to get married to someone else knowing that the latter has another valid marriage contract with someone else.

of marriage). Due to the value attached to marriage in Rwandan society, girls continue to be engaged in non-registered relationships despite the consequences for their rights and to the whole family in general. The rate of registration of marriage was at 67.2% among married respondents.

Ingaragazi

Another major problem is related to the *ingaragazi* which refers to a piece of land owned by the man alone and the whole family recognises it as his own property and that none of his wives has rights to it. This was a common practice in polygamous families in some parts of the Northern Province where this piece of land served as a guarantee for the man in case of need. Only 7.3% of the respondents said that their husbands have *ingaragazi*. When the man died, his children, not his wives, shared land. During land registration, in some cases the registered wife was considered as a joint owner of this particular piece of land, while in other cases the land was registered to the husband only and his children as successors. However, in practice *ingaragazi* was still to be the exclusive property of the husband in both cases.

Men in land registration and titling programme

The implementers of land registration and titling reported that women participated more actively than men in organised activities during the process of land registration. They attributed the low participation of men to different factors. As men used to think that the land was meant to belong to them, they do not see much need to participate while women know that they are the ones who struggle in raising children when families break up, and hence they want to participate in order to understand how to secure their rights. This is especially true of women whose rights are not guaranteed, such as those in polygamous relationships and those whose marriages are not registered. Another suggested reason is that women are closer to the land than men. Women spend all their time working in the fields, while men go out in search of other kinds of jobs. When they are far from home, the women stay in the fields. That is why it is mostly women are the ones who turn up for organised meetings in their villages. However, one would imagine that men would be threatened by women's expression of interest in land issues and they (men) would make sure to participate in order to defend their positions.

Little knowledge about land-related laws

A low level of knowledge is a cross-cutting challenge and seems to aggravate the other challenges mentioned above. Findings revealed that nearly 80% of the respondents admitted not having knowledge about land-related laws. Those with some knowledge knew little about the succession law, but knew very little about other laws and policies like the Organic Land Law and the National Land Policy.

Conclusively, these challenges constitute an obstacle in the efforts towards improving women's land rights in Rwanda. The population hardly accepted the changes related to women's land rights and gender issues in general, firstly, because they know little about the motives of those changes; secondly, because the ideology of the male supremacy channelled through a complex system of cultural norms is still strong in people's minds

(Daley, Dore-Weeks and Umuhoza, 2010; Bayisenge, Hojer and Espling, forthcoming), including women themselves. Consequently, they hesitantly put into practice the little they know about the new land laws. This is very crucial because in order to have effective implementation processes, changes in practice and the values on which they are based would have to be legitimised first in the minds of the people. However, the mistake that implementers make is to assume that since these principles are already included in the constitution, they are also present in the minds of the people (Gore, 2003).

To tackle this obstacle, continuing awareness-raising activities (to help people know what these laws say and why they are important) as one of the strategies to help people adapt to social changes are crucial and the role of social workers is important in this regard.

Role of social workers and land rights for women

Social workers have played diverse roles in the struggle for gender equality and social change. Dominelli (2012) highlights that social workers participated actively as individuals in women's movement; as development workers tackling structural inequalities; as therapists addressing individual women's troubles; and as participants in the UN, its related agencies and international organisations. She further indicates that they were part of and drew upon the wider social movements of the 1960s to develop practice, undertake research that highlighted multiple and persistent oppressions of women, and actions that empower women. This global activism has led to the incorporation of women's rights into the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Dominelli, 2012). Additionally, due to the subordinate status and vulnerable position of women in most societies, the United Nations adopted the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1979 – a human rights document focusing especially on women's rights (Ghandi, 2012).

Social workers supported all these efforts as well as the redefinition of women's rights during the Nairobi World Conference on women in 1985. This redefinition gave credence to a rights-based approach to women's well-being and set equality for women as a universal goal (Dominelli, 2012). The contribution of social work educators and practitioners has highlighted the multiple oppressions women faced locally, nationally and internationally in the private and public domain and alongside social divisions, including race, age and disability (Dominelli, 2012). The International Federation of Social workers (IFSW, 2012) noted six critical concerns regarding women in their 2005 International Policy on Women: poverty, the economy, education, health, violence and the girl child.

Despite this global activism towards the respect of women's human rights, unequal treatment of women continues in every nation in all areas of life. Therefore, social workers should continue to play an important role in this struggle. Their prior involvement was relevant to the profession. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work, and addressing issues of women's rights should be part of social worker's mission. Since social workers are committed to human rights, they also commit themselves to strengthening women's rights because women have not achieved social justice in many national and cultural contexts (IFSW, 2012). Due to their ethical grounding in empowerment, social workers are an ideal group to help empower disenfranchised groups. They are able to work both with international non-governmental organisations and local

movements to help women achieve a culturally relevant model of equality (ibid.). Due to the varied means through which women experience discrimination, there are a variety of methods that social workers can use to help them. They can work on the macro level to help change laws, and they can also work on the mezzo and micro levels to assist in implementing laws and policies into tangible practice.

Social workers' role in ensuring land rights of women in Rwanda

Social work is a young profession in Rwanda. It started in 1998 particularly to deal with the aftermath of the 1994 genocide, and it is still searching for its rightful place and asserting its necessity in Rwandan society. Social workers in Rwanda may be of great help in dealing with the challenges associated with the implementation of LTR and women's rights but also in other activities aimed at improving the well-being of the population undergoing the process of economic growth and modernisation. The process of LTR has had a preparatory phase and is currently in a full-scale implementation phase in Rwanda. The role of social workers is important at each stage.

Preparatory phase: During the preparatory phase of LTR, the following activities were made: elaboration and revision of land-related law; field consultations in trial areas; local information campaigns; sensitisation meetings; as well as training of local land and *abunzi* committees and all other people who would be involved in the process. During this phase, different government agencies, international organisations and civil society organisations have been closely working together. The main aim was to explain to the masses what was going on and hear what the population thought about the land reform. At this stage the role of social workers is not only to listen to what the potential beneficiaries of laws, policies and reforms have to say, but also to attend to those who may seem to lose as a result of the proposed change. They can bring important conceptual and practical skills to work with ideas as well as with actions. Conceptually, they may bring their skills in the analysis of the historical background of women's land rights in Rwanda, the effects of women's access to land on their and their families' well-being as well as on the socioeconomic development of the country. Practically, their role may be, on one hand, to work closely with people to know what they think and make suggestions about the proposed new land laws, reforms, and policies. Thereafter, social workers could discuss with different professionals and partners the inclusion of people's suggestions in the documents. On the other hand, they may also work with people to identify and clarify for themselves issues to be addressed, to design short- and long-term strategies and tactics for addressing the issues and to plan for action.

Full-scale implementation: LTR in Rwanda has three main steps (DFID Rwanda, 2011). The first step was demarcation and adjudication. The local land committees together with the technical staff from the National Land Center and District Land Bureau demarcated each parcel of land and gave it an identification number, guided by the leader of the concerned village. All landholders were supposed to be present at their parcels during the time of demarcation. The second step was objection and correction where all landholders were invited to crosscheck if all the information was correct, before the final printing of the land certificates was done. The last step was the issuance of land titles which is an

ongoing process. Throughout the three steps of LRT programme's implementation, social workers' roles entail working closely with the masses to detect what people think have been the most successful steps and what has gone wrong. Therefore, in conjunction with different partners, social workers will be able to adopt a new agenda for action to address the situation.

Main findings from the study by Bayisenge, Hojer and Espling (forthcoming) revealed that the population has limited knowledge on the new legal land frameworks but also hardly put into practice what they know. This corroborated the ideas of Gore (2003), who points out that legislation by itself is not the easy road to social change. This author goes further to say that the legitimacy for any given law lies in the existence of a consensus among the generality of people about what that law seeks to achieve as being desirable and the success in the enforcement of law depends upon the existence of such a consensus. To increase the awareness that could serve as a prerequisite to that consensus, respondents suggested continuous sensitisation about new land laws and on women's rights specifically. Here, the involvement of social workers in the sensitisation and awareness raising campaigns is vital.

For social workers to be able to help in this matter there should be creation of permanent positions of social workers at different levels of administration.⁵ As there are positions at these levels for staff such as a lawyer in charge of civil status, the agronomist in charge of agricultural issues, the accountant for financial administration, there should as well be a person in charge of social affairs. The question is why not also introduce the position of a qualified "social worker" and not a person who has a degree from related disciplines such as education, public administration, sociology or clinical psychology? This very often happens in Rwanda where professionals from these disciplines are doing the work of social workers. However, this may positively or negatively affect the credibility of a new profession that is still claiming its identity in the country. It is worth noting that the need for social workers to work with professionals in different areas such as economic development and planning, health, gender equality and education remains important. Social workers are further required to be sensitive to sociocultural and political factors in order to engage in effective social action strategies (Anderson *et al.*, 1994).

In their role, social workers should adopt a social development approach. This approach has been differently defined, and the definitions are controversial. Midgley (1995) who has written significantly on social development, social welfare and social work from an international perspective, defines social development as "a process of planned social change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole in conjunction with a dynamic process of economic development". (ibid., 25) Social development was given international recognition at the UN World Summit on Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995. It is the main form of social work in resource-poor countries and seeks to incorporate social progress with economic development (Payne, 2005). In some parts of the world such as in Africa and Asia, social work redefined itself as social development to align the profession more closely with national objectives.

⁵ See footnote 1.

One of the characteristics of this approach is to take into account local factors, such as traditional religious beliefs, the role of village headmen and chiefs, extended family and tribal systems, and cultural values that differ from the traditional Western emphasis (Anderson *et al.*, 1994). The findings from the current study reveal that cultural values of male supremacy in Rwanda are very strong and affect the effort to ensure women's land rights. Any attempt to deal with this challenge should first build on the local realities. Therefore, this shows how hard it is to dichotomise customary and statutory systems. Despite the fact that the new land laws in Rwanda qualified customary rights as outdated and inappropriate, the findings have shown how implementers relied on customary ways of solving some of the land-related conflicts caused during land registration.

Social work educators and practitioners in African countries need to find paradigms that address social issues built on the sociocultural, economic, political and environmental conditions concerning their community (Mwansa, 2012). The history of social work as a profession and social work education and training is both Western and colonial (Hochfeld *et al.*, 2009). Indigenous social work or indigenisation are concepts frequently invoked in the discussions about social work in developing countries. They refer to the appropriateness of theories, and practices as well as values, norms and philosophies that underlie practice (Drower, 2002; Hochfeld *et al.*, 2009). This means that social work must be practised in a manner that is appropriate to the people and the country. Anderson *et al.* (1994, 75) state that social work practice and education that is relevant to and effective in meeting the needs of people cannot be successfully carried out as long as it remains solely centred on the development of practice knowledge, theory and professional roles which have been developed in the West.

Conclusion

In conclusion, looking at the link between land and gender, the role of social workers is crucial in strengthening women's access to property, including land, because in many societies, women lack secure land rights and have less access to land than men do (FAO, 2011; USAID, 2013). As land is embedded in institutions within a society (Obeng-Odoom, 2012; RISD, 2013) and in the structures of power that women are confronted with, social work has to operate at multiple levels (global, national, local) and within diverse institutional arenas such as communities, social movements, markets, states and households (Razavi, 2003; Rao, 2007; WB, FAO and IFAD, 2009; RISD, 2013). Hence, it is of paramount importance to refer to a holistic social development approach (Hochfeld *et al.*, 2009) in order to deal with the complexity of women's access to land issues.

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Interrogating the Role of Social Work in Social Policy Reforms in Uganda: A Case of Demand-driven Approach for Rural Safe Water Delivery

Narathius Asingwire

Introduction

Since the 1980s, fundamental policy reforms have been introduced around the world, impacting in various ways the provision of social services by the state (Grindle and Thomas, 1991; Batley, 2004). The reforms that have been epitomised by the redefinition of the role of the State in service delivery such as in rural safe water provide a basis for interrogating the role played by problem-solving professions such as social work in maintaining and sustaining individual and societal welfare. Lack of basic social services such as safe water is highly regarded as a fundamental cause of poverty (United Nations, 2000; Government of Uganda, 2010, Mathew, 2004). The morbidity and mortality rates due to drinking contaminated water; the associated costs and time involved in treating and looking after the sick members of the family; time lost especially by women and children as they walk long distances to collect water; and the irregular attendance of school, especially by the girl-child, in order to collect water or look after the sick plunge rural households into the vicious trap of poverty. In a study by Twikirize *et al.* (2013), clients served by studied organisations reveal that safe water was one of the basic social services. In view of this, the role of social work in promoting universal and free access to safe water, especially for the poor, becomes very clear. To date there are a number of global efforts enshrined in the United Nations conventions and national efforts to address the problem of service delivery amidst reforms, but the impacts are yet to be felt by the majority poor.

The United Nations Millennium Declaration of the Year 2000 that commits all member states to the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aims at reducing the proportion of people living in poverty by 2015. The MDGs recognise that inadequate access to safe water is part of the problem of world poverty. At the national level, Uganda's efforts to make social services accessible to the majority of the population are anchored in the National Development Plan, 2010/11 – 2014/15, which lists safe clean water as a key requirement for poverty eradication. These efforts, however, have not been aided by the implementation of policy reforms such as the demand-driven approach to ensure

increased sustainable access to services. The almost absent role of professionals such as social workers in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of the policy reforms seems to be exacerbating the problem.

Understanding of social work

According to the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW, 2012), social work is a profession that promotes social change, problem-solving in human relationships, and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Arising from the fact that social work utilises theories of human behaviour and social systems, it intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments (*ibid.*), including governments and other resource systems. Accordingly, principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work (Hare, 2004). In the same vein, Clark (cited in Asquith, Clark and Waterhouse, 2005) emphasises social work's commitment to the realisation of rights and justice within the community. The realisation of rights encompasses respect for the inherent worth and dignity of all people. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW, 2004) explains that social workers could ensure social justice through challenging negative discrimination, recognising diversity and respecting ethnic and cultural diversity and challenging unjust policies and practices.

Social work entails anti-oppressive practice where the social worker is concerned with addressing the needs of service users, challenging oppressive social structures and the power dynamics in the service provider/service user relationship. Dominelli, cited in Izumi and Ronald (2005), argues that the aim of anti-oppressive practice is to change the structure and procedures of service delivery systems through macro changes. Izumi and Ronald (2005) argue that anti-oppressive social work aims at eradication of oppression through institutional and societal changes. The same authors add that in the realm of anti-oppressive practice, the structure of oppression and discrimination is the centre of analysis. Anti-oppressive practice draws the attention of social workers to the more focused objective of challenging structural power dynamics in order to eradicate various forms of oppression. Anti-oppressive practice, thus, offers a clearer linkage between social work practice and social justice in the ongoing policy reforms that impinge on free and fair access to social services.

Policy reforms in rural safe water provision

The defining characteristic of most approaches to policy reform in Africa since the late 1980s has been the rejection of the welfare state model in the provision of services, giving rise to a new development paradigm that is redefining the role of the nation state (Morales-Gómez, 1999). Three interrelated values underlie social policy reform, namely, (i) individual decision-making, (ii) personal responsibility, and (iii) citizen participation, which significantly impact on the poor's ability to access and enjoy social services, including rural safe water. The policy reforms for the delivery of safe water and sustainability are based on the assumption that the past policies characterised by the welfare state model of supply-driven or basic needs approach have been inefficient and ineffective. It is theorised that the demand-driven approach in rural water supply leads to increased community accessibility

and sustainability of water services through making the beneficiary communities accountable to meet some capital costs and the full cost of operation and maintenance of water supplies (Regmi and Fawcett, 2001). All these premises and principles of demand-driven approach are, however, faced with numerous challenges of ensuring social equity, social equality and social justice. Achieving sustainable universal accessibility to services still poses daunting challenges in greater magnitude, and possibly even more than it was under the welfare model of service provisioning.

The welfare model, often referred to as the supply-driven approach guided the provision of social services in Uganda from the colonial period to the time of Uganda's political independence in 1962 (Manyire and Asingwire, 1998). Uganda's post-independence regimes inherited the social welfare model, which guided the social service provision approach at the time until the early 1990s. Under the social welfare model, safe water provision was solely the responsibility of the State. No pre-conditions were set for communities to fulfil before the provision of safe water. Community need for services rather than ability to fulfil a set of conditions compelled government to provide the needed social services such as safe water. This approach was later to be faced with challenging concerns (Nabuguzi, 1995), which motivated the State to introduce reforms in total disregard of their implications, especially on the rural poor.

Coupled with the demand-driven approach, there have been other policy reforms with implications on social service delivery, and particularly rural safe water supply and accessibility. These include privatisation, a move toward market-oriented provision, decentralisation, reliance on local governments and communities for service delivery, introduction of user fees and cost recovery in social services, and enhanced community involvement or participation. All these have varying implications for service delivery, poverty reduction and institutional capacity for enhancing the well-being of society (Kishindo, 2000; Regmi and Fawcett, 2001; Mathew, 2004).

Unlike under the supply-driven approach, the implementation of the demand-driven approach requires that all support is determined in response to demand by the community. Communities initiate the request for the water service and make "informed" choices about service level and technology options. Communities are further obliged to make up-front contributions towards the capital costs; select a water user committee to manage the source; and meet all the operation and maintenance costs. The community, and not the state, owns and is responsible for sustaining its facilities. The introduction of the demand-driven approach in rural water delivery in Uganda started in the mid-1990s. Guided by the national approach, various non-State actors have made attempts to shift from the supply-driven to demand-driven approach in the provision of rural water services. What is clear is that all these players – government and non-State actors involved in rural water supply – opted for policy changes without critically assessing their far-reaching implications and impacts on the rural poor.

Implications and impact of policy reforms on rural safe water provision

Social policy reforms have largely been a result of the destatisation of the economies, which has come to mean the “new management” in social service delivery (Manning, 2002). The new management has translated into the reduction of government’s direct role in not only managing economies, but also providing social services and placing greater reliance on the market as a provider and manager of services (Batley, 2004). In a situation where safety nets are not well developed and put in place to cushion the poor, the cardinal principles of social policy are highly impacted on by several other policy changes including decentralisation of service delivery.

Several other reforms have been introduced when developing countries have vigorously been decentralising management within the public sector and delivery of social services (Jeppsson, 2004; Batley, 2004). Decentralisation has been the hallmark of reforms in social service delivery in the developing countries that have embraced the reforms, especially in the health and water sectors. Such reforms have included cost-sharing or charging user-fees for social services, contracting out, involvement of other public sector participation, enabling and regulating the private sector. While studying decentralisation and national health policy implementation in Uganda, Jeppsson (2004) cautions that the increasing decentralisation of the health care system is not being followed promptly as government assumed a fairly uncomplicated process of diffusion, which was a misdirected assumption due to different values, the absence of a common frame of reference, and the lack of government support. Current policy reforms have seen the Ugandan government transforming itself from being the direct implementer of rural water supply projects to being the facilitator, regulator and monitor of implemented projects by the private sector – all of which have meant varying impacts on the poor.

Water Aid and Tear Fund (2003) commissioned a study in Uganda to find out if private sector participation benefited the poor. The policy of private sector participation was found not to comprehensively tackle the underlying causes of water utilities’ failure to serve the poor. In four key areas, namely, capacity-building, community participation, finance and institutional reform, major problems were found. The involvement of local communities was often found lacking in private sector participation reform programmes. Where private sector participation has failed to deliver the promised gains, the case often is that the poor are seen mainly as recipients, rather than contributors to development. Whether projects involve large- or small-scale private sector participation, the focus is on giving contracts or concessions to the private sector. Social mobilisation and community participation, proven time and again as prerequisites for sustainable development, are seen as burdens and non-essential components of the task. Failure to consult communities means that the interests of the poor are often not being represented. It results in a lack of ownership of projects and an absence of accountability between users and service providers, which has adverse long-term effects on sustainable access to safe water as well as denying the poor access to services. Certain conditions under the private sector participation arrangements tend to exclude the poorest, in instances where the community is unable to provide the

mandatory contribution; it is often excluded from receiving the service. All this and several other factors further provided ground for interrogating the role of social work in service delivery.

Social work and provision of rural safe water as a social service

Social services can be classified as statutory and complementary social security schemes, organised in various ways covering the main risks of life, such as those linked to health, ageing, occupational accidents, unemployment, retirement and disability. They could also include other essential services provided directly to the person. These services play a preventive and social cohesion role consisting of customised assistance to facilitate social inclusion and safeguard fundamental rights. Social services are people-oriented, designed to respond to vital human needs, in particular the needs of users in vulnerable positions. They provide protection from general as well as specific risks to life and assist in personal challenges or crises. Very importantly, social services are key instruments for the safeguard of fundamental human rights and human dignity, thereby enhancing the capacity of individuals to fully participate in society (European Commission, 2007). This understanding of social services provides compelling justification for social workers' visible involvement in policy reforms to ensure that the basic principles of social work and policy are adhered to in service provision – social equity, social equality and social justice.

The concept of social equity refers to fairness in distribution and or access to services, benefits, opportunities and decision-making power between different individuals or groups. A key policy objective of the Uganda rural water sub-sector relevant to equitable distribution of services is captured in the slogan '*some for all – rather than more for some*', which was the main theme for the Global Consultation on Safe Water and Sanitation for the 1990s. The issue of equity is of paramount importance as it is closely related to poverty reduction, for it is often the poor that are inequitably served with safe water services. A critical question is: To what extent do the policy reforms promote or hinder equitable allocation and distribution of water services, and what role can social work practitioners play to reverse the situation? Under the supply-driven approach, no condition or criteria is for safe rural water delivery, but rather the presence of the need for the water service and, hence, equity issues do not arise. On the other hand, complying with the principles of demand-driven approach implies that communities which fail to meet all the demand-driven conditions are left unserved. Communities visibly in a low socioeconomic bracket often fail to access information; forward an application for a water source; and raise the required capital contribution towards a new water source.

Policy reforms are thus contributing to selective access as opposed to universalism, thereby infringing on the principle of social equity. This is as a result of pegging service provision to one's purchasing power which alienates some sections of the community from service access. It could also be because of some people's lack of knowledge of available resources. In such instances, social workers could take up the role of system linkage due to their knowledge of the various service providers. Social workers need to link alienated sections of the community or individuals to other existing service providers that do not strictly insist on pursuing policies that create inequity in society. The social worker

could thus be seen as an intermediary who assists in connecting people with resources (Hepworth *et al.*, 2010).

Asquith, Clark and Waterhouse (2005) explain that social work is charged with addressing the shortcomings of key policy areas. The demand-driven approach to safe water provision has had several gaps that include negative discrimination on the basis of ability, social exclusion, inequitable access and others. Social work's aim, in such an instance, is to take up a system developer role. Under this role, the social worker takes the opportunity to improve or expand services based on assessment of unmet client needs, gaps in services and the need for preventive services (Hepworth *et al.*, 2010). In relation to this, Schwartz, cited in Bernstein (1995), argues that social workers mediate the process through which the individual and society reach out for each other through a mutual need for self-fulfilment. Social workers are thus supposed to be concerned with the nature and range of available services and the delivery of those services to consumers in a manner that ensures the realisation of social equity (Bernstein, 1995). Social work practitioners are obliged by their professional values to lobby and advocate the implementation of policies that adhere to principles of social equity thereby planting seeds for social equality in policy reforms.

Gil (1990) considers social equality as a principle of social policy that derives from a central value premise according to which every individual and every social group are of equal intrinsic worth and, hence, are entitled to equal civil, political, social and economic liberties, rights, and treatment, as well as subject to equal constraints. The principle of social equality attempts to minimise the consequences of social competition in the provision of social services that the reforms have ushered in the social sector. A demand-driven approach invites competition among and between communities in need of safe water and strict adherence to the approach entails a situation where able communities will meet an up-front cost to be rendered a service, while communities that are unable cannot apply. Pursuing a purely demand-driven approach tends to lock out the poor and the disadvantaged, for the approach does not give equal opportunities, and thereby infringes on social justice in service delivery.

Hunsaker and Hanzl (2003) define social justice as a process through which society attains a more equitable distribution of power in the political, economic and social realms. Social justice seeks to reduce inequalities in society, which are morally objectionable (Jansson, 1994). The social justice perspective focuses on anti-discriminatory practice, which social workers inevitably ought to respond to (Payne, 2004), and come out strongly as a voice for the poor. Communities that are very poor with no political clout stand a high chance of being left out in the allocation of water services as they cannot afford the capital cost contribution as well as costs of repairs. As Midgley (1997, 174) puts it, "a concern with social justice is most often impelled when social workers find themselves in situations where political power is abused and where democratic forms of political expression are suppressed". Empowered by their knowledge and skills, social workers have a duty to challenge unjust policies and practices. They have a duty to advocate and lobby for equitable and fair distribution of resources in general and social services in particular.

Social workers also have an obligation to challenge social conditions that contribute to social exclusion, stigmatisation or subjugation, and work towards an inclusive society (IFSW, 2004).

Existing policy reforms result in exclusion of some sections of the community from rural safe water usage. The social work profession identifies itself with the strong need for individuals or communities to exercise their right to participation within and or outside the community. Asquith, Clark and Waterhouse (2005) explain that social workers support and provide assistance to the most vulnerable sections of the society and ensure that they are socially included in society. Social workers are thus tasked with playing an advocacy role with and on behalf of the intended service users. The social worker's role is to assist or support individuals or groups by giving voice or assisting them to give their own voice to their wishes, needs and aspirations (Blewett, Lewis and Tunstill, 2007). Coulshed and Orme (2006) link the advocacy role to the issue of user involvement or participation, and argue that the basis of advocacy is that the voices of service users are heard at both the level of individual interventions and policy development.

The demand-driven approach to safe water provision requires the community to identify their needs and then make demands according to the needs at hand. The social worker in this situation takes up the role of an educator and or disseminator of information. Hepworth *et al.* (2010) recognise the need for social workers to provide essential information to the service users. Similarly, a social worker needs to provide essential information and/or educate government officials who are struggling with the new roles of a facilitator, regulator and monitor rather than implementers. In this way, the social worker would not only have passed on information to the government officials, but would also have built the capacity of these individuals with regard to facilitation, regulating and monitoring as a vehicle for promoting service accessibility.

Social work and sustainable access to rural safe water under the demand-driven approach

Cleaver and Toner (2006), looking at implications for equality of access, sustainability and effectiveness, observe that the ideals of demand-driven approaches such as community participation, ownership and cost-sharing as policy goals are beset with paradoxes. They argue that the benefits of a demand-driven approach may be overstated, both in terms of efficiency or resource management and equality of outcomes. Safe water, perceived as a health service, is confronted with the current thinking and debate, which are primarily directed towards economic consideration and rationalisation (Gibb, 1998). The demand-driven approach, which has been much popularised at the expense of supply-driven approaches leads to imbalances in socioeconomic infrastructure (Kishindo, 2000) and carries the risk of leaving behind some communities in the race for development. Given their professional skills and knowledge, social workers have a cardinal duty of ensuring that marginalised groups are not affected by policy reforms that popularise social services such as safe water more as a private good. Their professional mandate commits social workers to promoting sustainable access to such services.

According to Adejumobi (1999), the notion that social services are mostly private goods for which the principle of exclusion could be applied and economic rents charged on those services is a distorted and spurious argument. Although some of the services may appear nominally private in nature, they are essentially public goods in terms of their social essence, national value and importance. In this regard, social work practitioners are mandated to counteract the notion of particular services perceived as private good, which greatly impact on the welfare of the population, thereby being legitimate “public good” services. A notion that conceives safe water as an economic good illustrates the complexities of promoting equity, efficiency and sustainability in the water sector.

Sustainable provision of rural safe water refers to a situation where 80%–90% of constructed water points are functional at any given time (Government of Uganda, 1999). There are marked disagreements on whether reforms in the provision of services lead to sustainability (Morales-Gómez and Torres, 1999) due to the assumption by the water demand theory that users will participate, are willing and can afford to pay for the water services. The role of a social worker in helping to translate passive community participation into active participation as envisaged in the demand-driven approach cannot, therefore, be overemphasised if the demand theory has to hold sway.

The demand-driven approach was largely in response to the failures of the supply-driven approach that was envisaged to have resulted in a state of disrepair of several water points attributed to, among others, lack of effective community participation (Merret, 2002; Batley, 2004; Mathew, 2004). The argument for this new paradigm broached and developed by the water demand school is that it embodies the expressed preferences and willingness to pay for the service by the users that are critical to successful project design. Affordability notwithstanding, willingness to pay for the service is dependent on the level of mobilisation of the community where social work can play a critical role, but is often underrated in conceptualisation and implementation of such community development projects.

Whereas all the above can be appreciated, there is a glaring gap on the issues of “affordability”, especially, in a rural setting where massive poverty prevails. Batley (2004) observes that many of the reforms themselves have usually generated a first impact of increased stress and poverty. In many developing countries with weak or non-existent welfare state institutional systems, it is difficult to minimise the impacts of social policy reforms induced from outside (Morales-Gómez and Torres, 1999; Batley, 2004; Baltodano, 1999). Furthermore, a number of factors act as obstacles to development of individual initiative and citizens’ commitment to finding solutions to local problems, sustaining these solutions and even their willingness to accept greater responsibility (Morales-Gómez and Torres, 1999); corruption, unemployment, lack of opportunity and financial management. Elsewhere, other challenges of sustainability of rural water points have been attributed to the weak private sector or its reluctance to invest in the sector due to limited profit margins (Mathew, 2004).

Conclusion

Policy reforms in social service provision such as rural safe water demand the strengthening of key areas to do with capacity-building, community participation, institutional and financial reforms. The shift to demand-driven approach has undermined the strengths of these key areas, which urgently calls for the involvement of professional disciplines such as social work to help in bridging this gap. The principles of social work, namely, social equity, justice, equality as well as mobilisation and community participation in service delivery have not been upheld, which makes the role of social work unquestionable in social service delivery in a changing policy environment. Through advocacy and lobbying by a social worker, the undesirable outcomes of policy reforms can be addressed. The existing gaps and shortfalls that emerged with the introduction of a demand-driven approach to rural water supply warrant intervention from the discipline of social work. Issues of community participation, equity, equality, building capacities, advocacy, system linkage, effective communication and dissemination can professionally be taken up by social workers to ensure that policy reforms in social service provisioning such as safe water lead to fair outcomes.

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NGOs and Child-sensitive Social Protection Programming in Uganda¹

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Introduction

Social protection now ranks among the topmost items on the agenda of most Southern countries (Gatenio Gabel, 2012). It engenders broader social and economic outcomes and is considered a key ingredient that might help poor countries to achieve wider development aspirations such as the 2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Barrientos, 2010; 2011; Barrientos and Hulme, 2005; Hickey, 2006). While its role in combating poverty cannot be discounted (see Barrientos and Villa 2013; Department for International Development [DFID], 2005), there is an emerging consensus that social protection benefits may not fully materialise unless they are tailored to the specific needs of vulnerable groups (Gatieno Gabel, 2012; Sabates-Wheeler, Devereux and Hodges, 2009). One variant of this argument relates to the call by key development actors such as UNICEF to make social protection sensitive to the needs of children (UNICEF, 2009). The child-sensitive social protection approach (CSSP) is based on the evidence that children need special attention for development programmes to benefit them because they undergo complex physical, psychological and intellectual development as they grow and experience poverty and vulnerability in multidimensional and fundamentally different formats compared to adults (Roelen and Sabates-Wheeler, 2012; Sabates-Wheeler, Devereux and Hodges, 2009; UNICEF, 2009). However, there is currently limited evidence on the questions of whether, how, and with what results development agencies in low income countries have experimented with the CSSP approach.

This chapter presents initial attempts for filling this research gap through investigating social protection programmes of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Uganda – a country where 60% of the population is made up of children aged below 17 years (Population Secretariat and UNPF, 2012). Overall emphasis is that NGOs and related agencies can be child-sensitive if they ‘return to their roots’ as helping and development-oriented organisations that are underpinned by the values, principles and practices of

¹ We wish to acknowledge the support given by Cordaid Netherlands that made it possible to do fieldwork and develop this chapter.

social work. The chapter draws on fieldwork on social protection programmes of 24 NGOs carried out in 2012. This exploratory and descriptive study covered organisations in the three districts of Kitgum, Pader and Lira in Northern Uganda. Data presented is derived mainly from in-depth analysis of programmes implemented by the organisations based on secondary documents and insights from programme officials. Although focus is placed on NGOs operating in post-war Northern Uganda, the authors consider that the lessons drawn are reflective of the situation in Uganda more generally.

This chapter is structured as follows: It starts by discussing the meaning of child-sensitive social protection, its rationale and the role of social work therein. A discussion of the role of NGOs in delivering social protection follows, before the key findings of the study and the main challenges facing NGOs in the social protection sector are presented. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the potential role of social workers in strengthening child-sensitive social protection programming.

Child-sensitive social protection (CSSP) and social work

The chapter builds upon the definitions that consider social protection as comprising measures designed to protect people against socially unacceptable levels of risk and deprivation (Gatieno Gabel, 2012). In relation to children, UNICEF views social protection as consisting of policies that address “the inherent social disadvantages, risks and vulnerabilities that [children are] born into, as well as those acquired later in childhood” (UNICEF, 2009, 2). The view of the authors is that CSSP comprises both formal and non-formal actions aimed at protecting young children from the risk of exposure to any forms of serious vulnerabilities, whether natural or man-made, and providing mitigative services in case of exposure. In the latter instance, the purpose is to pre-empt the occurrence of irreversible consequences in relation to the physical, emotional and social development of children, particularly in their early years. This paper examines only formal social protection programmes delivered by NGOs. Caution should be given that not every intervention undertaken by NGOs targeting children is child-sensitive. Being child-sensitive requires that an intervention puts the priorities of children, particularly in relation to their survival, development, protection and participation at the centre. Temin (2008) points out that social protection instruments such as cash transfers, social insurance, early childhood development care and alternative care can be deemed as either child-sensitive or not. This is basically true depending on how such interventions take into account the best interests of children during design and implementation. A programme such as Universal Primary Education (UPE), introduced in 1997, has addressed the chasm in educational access among underprivileged children and has drastically improved enrolment to over 80% and retention of more than 50% of children (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2004; 2010). The same programme, however, is yet to fully attend to the challenges of most children with disabilities and those with other special needs (such as children living with HIV) who, because of their circumstances, are unable to enjoy the full benefits of the programme without being enabled to access specific services. In addition, programmes initiated by some actors in the child protection sector have a tendency to address child concerns using a stand-alone or issue-focussed approach (say, focus on one of these: child labour, HIV/

AIDS or school dropout) without paying attention to the integrated nature of the problems and failing to address children's issues holistically. For this reason, priority is shifting among social workers from being issue-focussed to taking into account the full picture of vulnerabilities children experience and prioritising building an encompassing protective system. In this arrangement, a multitude of social work actors must work together to play specific roles in a synergetic, comprehensive and sustainable manner. It is in this spirit that social workers and other key duty bearers are challenged to focus their efforts on building a protective environment for children (see Landgren, 2004) and more so, prioritising on building functional formal and non-formal systems (see Wulczyn *et al.*, 2010).

In a nutshell, CSSP does not represent a new set of unique interventions. Instead it is an organising framework or a tool to assess development programmes "against the extent to which they respond to children's practical and strategic needs" (Roelen and Sabates-Wheeler, 2012, 292). Within this organising framework, social workers have a particular role to play as discussed below.

Social workers, first of all, have to appreciate the need to mainstream child-centred programming within a range of social protection programmes that organisations undertake and then move on to deploy any applicable expertise to support organisations whose programmes fall out of range. Student attachments, research and sharing of efficacious intervention models through learning groups provide avenues for knowing more about what organisations do and the changes they need to adopt to make their programming child-sensitive. Besides, social workers in the child protection sector are child advocates. Demonstrating the negative consequences of programming that excludes the best interests of children, social workers can work with the regulatory bodies to ensure that service providers avoid the dangers of exclusion of those most in need of services. Through tailor-made training and education programmes, social workers build advocacy capacity for protection of children on account of size, physical strength and dependency on adults as emphasised by the International Federation of Social Workers' manual on Social Work and the Rights of the Child (IFSW, 2002); use a rights-based perspective as implied by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); underline the view as propagated by the United Nations (2001, 6) that social protection interventions targeting children serve as "a foundation at a societal level for promoting social justice and social cohesion, developing human capabilities and promoting economic dynamism and creativity".

Social workers play a preventive and protective role as indicated by the British Association of Social Workers (BASW, 2012). While social workers have a lot to share from practice experience based on protective work, a lot remains unknown regarding the best way to prevent the multitude of vulnerabilities that children experience in poorly resourced countries such as Uganda. There is emerging consensus, however, that building the capacity of the caregivers at the household and community level engenders a protective environment and prevents a host of vulnerabilities children are exposed to as indicated in the National Strategic Program Plan 2012 - 2016 for orphans and other vulnerable children (Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development, 2004; 2011) and the United States Plan for Children Outside of Family Care (United States

Government, 2012). Social workers are, thus, challenged to understand the best way to support civil society organisations and government to deliver sustainable interventions within the micro (family) and mezzo (community) levels, without promoting a culture of dependence and disempowering the caregivers. Targeting the higher levels, including the regional and national government, should serve to strengthen the establishment of a conducive environment that makes it possible to: a) establish child-friendly laws and policies; b) improve resource allocation for the most vulnerable who are not targeted through the usual channels of service delivery; c) regulate the work of service providers and ensure maintenance of minimum quality standards; d) build the capacity to deliver the full continuum of care and alternative care frameworks; and e) promote child participation in all programmes affecting their lives (see Miko and Park, 2003). These roles fit squarely within the values for delivery of child-sensitive social protection.

The case for child-sensitive social protection

Approaching social protection with a child-sensitive lens should bring numerous benefits, not only to children, but also to their families, communities and the broader society. Three key functions of CSSP are discussed here.

In the first place, children comprise more than half of Uganda's population. They were among the most affected of the 7.5 million children living in poverty in 2010 (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2010). Children living in poverty are more likely to grow up to become poor adults (Roelen and Sabates-Wheeler, 2012, 292). The CSSP helps in the identification of the underlying causes of chronic poverty and social exclusion which irreversibly affect children's lifetime capacities and opportunities. Indeed, strategic investments in children help to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty (Sabates-Wheeler, Devereux and Hodges, 2009; Sanfilippo, de Neubourg and Martorano, 2012).

Secondly, and as mentioned earlier, vulnerabilities are likely to be experienced differently depending on the individual's stage in their life course (infant, child, youth and so on), their social positioning (such as gender) and their geographical location (urban or rural), among other factors (Sabates-Wheeler, Devereux and Hodges, 2009). Even when whole communities are experiencing a natural or man-made calamity, such as HIV/AIDS and war, children still face peculiar difficulties compared to adults (Ochen, Jones and McAuley, 2012; Roelen *et al.*, 2011; Yates, Chandan and Lim Ah Ken, 2010). Moreover, by virtue of their age and status in society, children are practically and legally less able to claim their rights without the strong support that social protection strategies can offer (Gatieno Gabel, 2012). Therefore, effective organisations must help children with a clear understanding of their innocence and dependence for the provision of basic needs and upholding of their rights (IFSW, 2002).

The third rationale for CSSP is the economic value which accrues from timely investment in children. Alderman and Behrman (2006), cited in Roelen and Sabates-Wheeler (2012), estimate that the economic gain for each infant that is moved out of low birth weight status, due to nutrition protective measures, is about US\$510. This is attributed to increased labour productivity and reduction of the costs incurred by infant illness and death (Roelen and Sabates-Wheeler, 2012). There is also ample research

pointing to the link between investing in children, particularly in the critical areas of child protection, health and education and long-term poverty reduction (Sanfilippo, de Neubourg and Martorano, 2012).

While these claims are appealing, it is not clear how far organisations at the point of implementation have embraced child-sensitive social protection, particularly in low income countries.

NGOs and social protection in low income countries

Non-governmental organisations are assumed to play a crucial role in the emergence and operation of social protection programmes in developing countries (Gatieno Gabel, 2012). This is especially due to their strong involvement in advocacy and social service delivery. The focus of this paper is on the service delivery role of NGOs – an aspect that gained prominence at the height of the neoliberal resurgence during the 1980s when NGOs became an alternative to the retreating State as the engine of development in most poor countries (Bukenya and Hickey, 2014). The characteristics of NGOs such as being grassroots-based, harbingers of progressive development agendas such as participation, gender and empowerment, and being close to poor people made them particularly attractive to donors who felt that NGOs were well-suited to replace the much derided State (Lewis and Kanji, 2009; Marcussen, 1996). Indeed, during this time, there was increased direct funding from international donors to NGOs and consequently, their numbers soared in most African countries (Therkildsen and Semboja, 1995).

Besides the general observation that NGOs provide critical social services, there is an emerging body of literature depicting NGOs as key direct players in the social protection sectors across the developing world. In Fiji, Mohanty (2011) shows that NGOs have a long history of engaging in child protection, providing protection to the needy, assistance for the homeless, school fees, scholarships to poor and disadvantaged children, and participating in child rehabilitation programmes. In Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee's (BRAC) *Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction: Targeting the Ultra Poor* programme is just one in a country that probably has the highest density of NGOs in the whole world. BRAC started the programme as an experiment in 2002, but had, by 2007, covered 272,000 households in the poorest districts and spent around US\$ 32 million per annum (Hulme and Moore, 2007). NGOs have also prominently featured in Kenya's social protection programmes including the Hunger Safety Nets Programme, funded by the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Korogocho cash transfer initiative run by Concern Worldwide (Hurrell and MacAuslan, 2012). The former is a pilot project which makes regular cash transfers to 60,000 households in three target groups (older people, households with high dependency ratios and community selected households) for three years to combat food insecurity and poverty in Mandera, Marsabit, Turkana and Wajir districts of northern Kenya (Hurrell, Mertens and Pellerano, 2009). The latter provided regular cash to poor households in urban areas of Nairobi for up to a year following a food emergency precipitated by rising prices and falling incomes, and sought to persuade the government of the usefulness of a regular cash transfer programme (MacAuslan and Schofield, 2011).

In Uganda, several commentators have implicitly indicated that NGOs are key players in the delivery of social protection programmes (Devereux, Lwanga-Ntale and Sabates-Wheeler, 2002; Gelsdorf, Maxwell and Mazurana, 2012; Lwanga-Ntale, Namuddu and Onapa, 2008). The role of Ugandan NGOs in social protection is also implied by the large numbers of both foreign and local NGOs that have been operating in the country over the last two decades, the majority of them being service providers (Barr, Fafchamps and Owen, 2005; Bukenya, 2012). According to estimates, from under 500 NGOs in 1992 (World Bank, 1994, 21), the number of NGOs in Uganda skyrocketed to 2,655 in 2000 and to approximately 4,000 in 2003 (Wallace *et al.*, 2004, 18). Recent estimates put the figure in the region at 10,000 (Grover, Burger and Owens, 2011; NGO Forum, 2011) and the sector is described as “still growing” (Bukenya, 2012). However, relying on numbers to infer the role of NGOs in social protection provides limited analytic value because it trivialises social protection as synonymous to service delivery activities. In addition, it does not distinguish the categories of social protection or vulnerable groups that Ugandan NGOs target. Hence, this paper investigates what NGOs actually do in the field of social protection. To make this task manageable, focus was put on NGOs operating in Northern Uganda.

Status of child-sensitive social protection programmes in Northern Uganda

According to UNICEF and its partners, “child-sensitive” social protection programmes are those which adhere to the following principles: avoid adverse impacts on children; address age-specific vulnerabilities through a life-cycle approach; make specific provisions for children with specific vulnerabilities or belonging to specific groups; take into account the mechanisms of intra-household dynamics; and promote a legislative framework to protect children (UNICEF, 2009). In practical terms, however, programmes can be said to be child-sensitive if they address child-specific vulnerabilities that arise from 1) physical/biological factors, 2) dependence-related vulnerabilities, and 3) institutionalised disadvantages (Roelen and Sabates-Wheeler, 2011; Roelen and Sabates-Wheeler, 2012). Below, the current status of social protection programmes among selected NGOs in Uganda with respect to children is presented vis-à-vis the three mentioned dimensions of vulnerability.

Addressing the physical and/or biological vulnerabilities of children

Roelen and Sabates-Wheeler (2012) argue that children are more susceptible to the negative impacts of malnutrition and disease by virtue of their immature immune systems and under-development. In addition, lack of health care and low levels of education during infancy and childhood have far-reaching and long-lasting detrimental consequences which affect, not only the child as an individual, but also society as a whole (Gupta, De Wit and McKeown, 2007). This is why adequate support for child and maternal nutrition is identified as one of the concrete child-sensitive social protection interventions that touches on the well-being of children (UNICEF, 2009) and a critical component for future attainment of nutritional, health and educational status (Sabates-Wheeler, Devereux and

Hodges, 2009). In Uganda, however, the nutrition and health indicators are still abysmally poor. Up to 6.5% of the children suffer from malnutrition with 11.8% of children below five years going without breakfast (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2010, 106). HIV seroprevalence in the country stands at 7.3% (Uganda AIDS Commission, 2012). Many of the infected are children, for as much as 20% of all new HIV infections in Uganda are due to mother-to-child-transmission (Uganda AIDS Commission, 2012). Children, therefore, die at alarming rates in Uganda – the national averages for under-five and infant mortality rates are 137 and 76 deaths per 1,000 live births, respectively (Ministry of Health, 2013).

Child-sensitive social protection is needed to identify and intervene as early as possible where children are at risk, in order to prevent irreversible impairment or harm (UNICEF, 2009, 2). Our study observed that just a few NGOs (three in number) had nutritional programmes that targeted malnourished children. They worked with health centres to identify beneficiaries or directly provided nutritional supplements to children who attended primary schools and selected Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres.² One NGO's nutritional programme targeted children rather indirectly through feeding pregnant mothers. The programme targeted underweight pregnant mothers in their third trimester. In relation to this, however, Sabates-Wheeler, Devereux and Hodges (2009) make the case that there is a positive and robust correlation between poor nutritional status in children and low birth-weight which implies that feeding pregnant mothers directly benefits the unborn baby.

To make its programmes sustainable, one of the studied NGOs initiated a school-based gardening project with support from an international donor agency based in the Netherlands. The programme engages parents and schools to ensure food production with the aim of meeting the school feeding needs of children. The organisation requires beneficiary schools to have land for agriculture. In cases where schools have no land, some parents have stepped in and donated land to them. At present, only 26 UPE schools in Northern Uganda are benefitting from this programme.

Seven NGOs provided education support to primary and secondary school-going children. Interventions here complement government programmes of universal education at primary and secondary school levels by addressing the potential barriers that prevent vulnerable children from taking advantage of such policies that were alluded to in the previous section. Other interventions addressing biological vulnerabilities were in the area of health care. There were several organisations providing subsidised social or community health services. These focused on preventive services, particularly in the provision of HIV/AIDS services, such as the provision of antiretroviral therapy, prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, and malaria prevention.

Dependence-related vulnerabilities

Children are not supposed to be economic agents in their own right and are, therefore, highly dependent on adult members of the household, family or community for the distribution of resources in order to meet their physical, emotional and social requirements (Roelen and Sabates-Wheeler, 2012). Indeed, social norms in most Ugandan societies

² ECD centres are pre-primary schools.

dictate that parents and caregivers play a critical central role in childcare, development and protection. However, parents' and caregivers' capacities to play this role have been severely challenged by the extreme social and economic pressures in Uganda (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2009). The rate of orphanhood is also alarming. Recent studies show that in some parts of Northern Uganda, up to 22% of children are orphaned (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2010). This has overwhelmed the capacity of communities to absorb all children that require help. It is reported that only 6% of orphans and vulnerable children have their basic needs met (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2009). Their dependence on adults' support and protection means children who become orphans are exposed to significant risks, particularly in the context of conflict, humanitarian crises and HIV/AIDS (Sabates-Wheeler, Devereux and Hodges, 2009). As explained below, it is largely due to the gaps in the traditional extended family and community support networks that a sizeable number of children have adopted risky behaviours as a coping strategy.

Many vulnerable young people dropped out of school and now live or work on the streets in towns with many earning a living from begging or commercial sex work. Despite the government's Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy enacted in 1997, many orphans and vulnerable children are out of school (Ssewankambo, Steffensen and Tidemand, 2008). Yet, the access, retention and completion of education as well as safe school environments are critical protective factors that empower children to make informed decisions and to articulate and claim their rights in situations of exploitation and abuse, as well as to better identify and avoid risky behaviours or situations (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2009). According to the 2006 Uganda Demographic and Health Survey, the national completion rate of primary school stands at a miserable 48% (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2007).

Child protection practitioners also report that the number of children living on the streets has apparently increased³ over the last few years countrywide (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2009). Vulnerable children, orphaned or not, often work and most of them fail to attend school which increases their short- and long-term vulnerability. They have difficulties accessing basic services and are often subject to exploitation. It is, for instance, reported that upon their parents' death, many children find their property such as land appropriated by relatives, thereby depriving them of a means of support (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2009). Some seek temporary relief from their situation through substance abuse, and young girls are often lured into commercial sex work. Consequently, these children become trapped in a cycle of poverty, violence and abuse. And as they grow, they run an increasing risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and being in conflict with the law.

In response, two NGOs provided 'second-chance' education to enable out-of-school children to re-enter the education system and complete primary education. Their programmes targeted those who missed out on education opportunities such as over-

³ As an indication, in 2002 in Gulu District no recorded child was living on the streets, whilst in 2008/2009 hundreds of children are estimated to have been living on the streets. In Lira town, in 2009, child protection agencies were supporting over 250 children living on the streets.

age out-of-school children, formerly abducted children, former child soldiers and child mothers. Six organisations implemented vocational training programmes as a way of preparing adolescents for their own livelihoods. UNICEF (2009) considers this a key child-sensitive intervention that enables them to acclimatise to their role as current and future workers and parents.

Five NGOs under study also had livelihood support activities, including agricultural training, support for income-generating activities, formation of village savings and loans associations, and targeting low income families or vulnerable households to build their capacity to meet the basic needs of children. Such interventions are critical given that a sizable percentage of the population in Uganda is unable to meet basic needs with critical lack of food access and accelerated depletion of livelihood assets (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2009).

Institutionalised disadvantages

Institutionalised disadvantages refer to “the devaluation of certain groups in society based on perceptions of who they are ... [and] how those in power act in relation to them” (Roelen and Sabates-Wheeler 2012, 295). Some reports on Northern Uganda have pointed to the fact that children who were associated with fighting forces returned to an environment that made it extremely difficult for them to re-integrate into community life and attempt to rebuild a future for themselves (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2009). Taking the example of formerly abducted children who had given birth in captivity, Ochen, Jones and McAuley (2012, 92) reported that “society expects the returnee child mothers to take on socially prescribed roles and behavior, even though they have undergone transformative experiences in captivity, which make it difficult to conform to these expectations”. Other studies indicate that prevailing conditions of poverty and limited access to basic services mean that sympathy for returnees, especially those unable to contribute economically, is often not forthcoming (Gelsdorf, Maxwell and Mazurana, 2012; Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2009). This contributes to neglect, impoverishment and abuse of some returnees. Such children who lack family acceptance and support live in extreme poverty, and some have adopted negative coping strategies such as engaging in criminal activities, while others have been forced to take up exploitative forms of labour as a means of survival (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2009). Moreover, as Sabates-Wheeler, Devereux and Hodges (2009, 110) observe, “by virtue of their age and ‘minor’ status in society, children are practically and legally less able to claim their rights”.

Responses to the institutionalised disadvantage of children were mainly focused on raising awareness about child rights legislation. Child rights legislation aims to foster equity, reduce children’s vulnerabilities and enhance their overall position in society. Uganda ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Several provisions of the CRC have been domesticated to provide greater legal protection to children. However, the fact that most of the rights violations that legislations seek to address are still rampant, demonstrates that they have not been fully enforced yet. Several NGOs were involved in the provision of child protective services such as psycho-social support

for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, withdrawal and rehabilitation of street children, prevention of and response to violence in schools and legal aid for survivors of violence.

From the foregoing discussion, it is, therefore, clear that social protection programmes of NGOs in Uganda were visible in all the dimensions of CSSP. This is further summarised in Table 21.1.

Table 21.1: NGOs and child-sensitive social protection in Uganda

Vulnerabilities	NGOs' direct response	NGOs' indirect response
Biological	• Health and nutrition for children under five years and/or school feeding support • Psycho-social support for traumatised children • Education through provision for stipends for children, learning kits, mats, corner play games, cement and iron sheets for Early Childhood Development (ECD)	• Health and nutrition for lactating mothers • Teacher training for early childhood development
Dependence	• Withdrawal and rehabilitation of street children • Provision of vocational training for formerly abducted children, child mothers and war-affected youth • Prevention and response to violence in schools	• Empowering women to engage in income generating activities through the provision of a small start-up grant, for example, through provision of agricultural inputs • Voucher and cash transfer to vulnerable families
Institutional	• Psycho-social support for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence	• Child abuse prevention and response including legal aid support, i.e. provide pro bono (free) legal support to poor and marginalised groups

Source: Authors' compilation

It is important to note, however, that the study found not a single programme among the studied NGOs that could be deemed as sufficiently addressing children's vulnerabilities in a holistic manner. Therefore, although earlier reference was made to the large numbers of NGOs operating in Uganda, these organisations are far from addressing children's needs comprehensively as discussed below.

Limitations of existing NGO programmes for children in Uganda

Most non-governmental organisations' social protection interventions are limited in scope and coverage. Most programmes use a single instrument rather than a mix of interventions to address the multiple deprivations faced by children. Low coverage is a result of a combination of constraints, including financial and capacity limitations. This was reiterated by the Senior Probation and Welfare Officer in Pader district:

There is limited funding which affects transport and other logistical requirements [which undermines] case referrals.

The limited scope and coverage undermines the effectiveness of the different social protection initiatives, especially in the context of multiple vulnerabilities occasioned by conflict.

Although several organisations claimed to support orphans and vulnerable children, the services provided did not attend to vulnerable children who required specialised support such as disabled children, children with special needs, HIV/AIDS-affected children, and those affected by trauma. An opinion leader in Kitgum district stated:

There is no clear programme for supporting the [some categories of] OVC [orphans and other vulnerable children]. Most of them [such as those with disability] cannot go far with education. Most do not reach secondary school and those who do so do not go beyond that level.

Generally, such a limited scope restricted the effectiveness of social protection initiatives, especially in the context of widespread and multiple vulnerabilities such as those discernible in many Ugandan communities.

Related to the above, there was fragmentation of social protection provision. Many of the investigated NGO programmes were fragmented without a coherent strategy to articulate and foster synergies across them. There was an apparent lack of coordination among the different actors, with programmes sometimes targeting overlapping groups of children.

Most organisations manifested a lack of institutional capacity to deliver child-sensitive social protection programmes. This was visible through inadequate human resources, funding and limited structural capacity. Although only four organisations provided information about their annual budgets, it was evident that many were poorly resourced with annual budgets ranging between UGX 35,000,000 (US\$ 14,000) and UGX 150,000,000 (US\$ 60,000). Many programmes were vulnerable to financial shortfalls as they were primarily funded by foreign donors. These have a reputation of being unreliable (Gelsdorf, Maxwell and Mazurana, 2012; Ochen, Jones and McAuley, 2012). In terms of human resources, the average number of paid employees in the NGOs studied was 10 while the average number of volunteers was four. This figure is very low considering that these organisations claimed to cover several sub-counties with thousands of children. These constraints imply that in reality, only a few vulnerable children were reached by NGO programmes. The competence of staff was questionable as most programmes were poor on information management, monitoring and evaluation systems, and training facilities.

Additionally, the sustainability of most social protection programmes is questionable. As already noted, all the social protection programmes investigated were donor-funded projects and these were short-term in nature, with most of them operating for no more than three years. The problems of such funding arrangements for NGOs have been echoed elsewhere (Bukonya, 2012). But suffice to say, many programmes were narrowly focused on meeting the immediate or short-term needs of the population (such as school feeding programmes) rather than building the capacity of the beneficiaries to address their needs for the long-term.

Our study found limited evidence of children providing their opinions in relation to the development or implementation of social protection programmes, and it was apparent that obtaining feedback from children was not part of the process by most NGOs. Participation was limited to the level of children sharing benefits.

Lastly, the study established that weak infrastructure posed a major challenge for organisations to reach remote communities where the majority of vulnerable children reside. The study found that communities in areas with no basic infrastructure such as roads and bridges were avoided by NGOs. Indeed, Ugandan NGOs have been criticised elsewhere for having a ‘tarmac bias’ as opposed to focusing on remote areas with small access roads or those that are impassable during the rainy season (Dicklitch, 1998; Jones, 2009). This increases the exclusion of already vulnerable groups and contravenes the social work principle of social justice. Relatedly, poor infrastructure hindered the success of some social protection programmes, especially livelihood support targeting low income families or vulnerable households to build their capacity for meeting the basic needs of children.

Proposed role of social work in child-sensitive programmes

With respect to children with special needs, social workers need to support the design and development of institutionalised psycho-social support and mental therapy interventions for traumatised children. Such a programme would ensure that traumatised children are monitored to full recovery before they are allowed back in the community where there are hardly any health infrastructure for administering mental therapy and related referrals. Besides direct service provision, social workers could contribute in two other ways: a) training of the required personnel in trauma counselling and b) engaging in advocacy to bring issues of children with special needs to the attention of the Ministry of Education and Sports and other concerned agencies.

In relation to fragmentation and lack of coordination among NGOs, social workers need to support the design and development of institutionalised inter-agency mechanisms to facilitate coordinated case management, common data systems and knowledge sharing and dialogue. An important step in this direction would be the development of a regional and/or national registry of development actors to enable the identification and control of information for target populations, ensuring that programme implementation is streamlined, reducing duplication and enabling scale-up or graduation of programmes according to regularly updated information about beneficiaries.

Social workers can also facilitate the process of developing a regional social protection strategy for post-conflict areas such as Northern Uganda with clear reference to economic and social risks and vulnerabilities faced by children. The strategy could provide a clear roadmap for the development of relevant preventative, protective and promotive services, and enforcement of transformative anti-discrimination legislation. Agencies with an international presence such as UNICEF could play a useful coordinating role in helping to share examples of good practices, as well as facilitating access to technical assistance in developing such strategies where appropriate.

Social workers can ensure the sustainability of interventions by advocating the introduction of State-funded social protection interventions. This would go a long way in addressing the vulnerabilities faced by children in post-conflict areas such as Northern Uganda in terms of reduced education opportunities and health care access, household food insecurity, chronic or shock-induced poverty, economic vulnerability, and reliance on child labour. As noted earlier, many of the current projects are pilot in nature and spearheaded by NGOs with the support of international donors. Although these can generate useful lessons, they are unlikely to scale up into national programmes because they are not “government owned” from inception (Niño-Zarazúa *et al.*, 2012). Social workers can engage in action research aimed at producing evidence necessary to convince politicians and bureaucrats about the viability of the various child-sensitive social protection options. Social workers ought to help NGOs repackage social protection interventions. Decisions about what types of social protection initiatives to invest in have to be informed by a systematic vulnerability assessment. Social workers can establish the main vulnerabilities children and their families face, as well as the political, institutional, fiscal and sociocultural factors likely to facilitate or constrain the introduction of particular mechanisms. While cash transfers are an increasingly popular social protection modality, it is important that other instruments are considered as part of a broader package to tackle the ‘multi-dimensional’ vulnerabilities many children in the northern region face. These include social health insurance and subsidised services.

Social workers can advocate increased involvement of children in decisions that affect their lives. The social work profession recognises a child as an individual person with views, feelings and evolving capacity (IFSW, 2002). Thus, it aims to ensure that all children have a right to express their views and have them taken seriously in all matters that affect them. Meaningful involvement of children in societal affairs can go a long way in mitigating institutional vulnerabilities. However, promoting children’s and young people’s effective participation is a skill that has to be developed over time, with creativity and practice. According to IFSW (2002, 12), once the skill is developed, “...even very young children can be helped to express their views and perceptions of circumstances and people through drawing, talking and play”.

Social workers can also play a key role in building the capacities of NGOs to improve programme design and monitoring and evaluation aspects of social protection programmes. Institutionalising robust monitoring, evaluation and learning mechanisms is essential to ensure maximum efficiency and equity, so that scarce resources are used to best benefit those who are most in need. Social workers can give technical advice on how to undertake baseline surveys and lesson learning from pilot programmes, in order to facilitate timely programme adjustments and to generate and disseminate evidence of programme impacts so as to garner the broad political support required to take programmes to scale.

Reflecting on children’s involvement, social workers should ensure that children play age-appropriate roles in the design and implementation of various social protection interventions. As champions of children’s rights, social workers ought to ensure that children’s involvement is not manipulative – where adults trick, influence and control

children, decorative – where children’s involvement is equivalent to window dressing or tokenistic – where their involvement is not intended to enlist and take into consideration their views but simply symbolic (Hart, 1992). Using their professional expertise and authority, social workers should rather demonstrate best practices in consulting with children and taking into account their views; assigning age-appropriate responsibilities to children so that they are co-creators of change during planning and implementation; and where appropriate, giving children a chance to take a lead in certain assignments while being supported by adults. Besides being their right, children’s involvement is also an important element in their development, helping to enhance their self-esteem, strengthening their independence, resilience and social competence (Lansdown 2004, 4).

Last but not least, social workers ought to ensure that NGO programmes promote the principle of social justice. The pursuit of social justice involves identifying, seeking to alleviate and advocating strategies to overcome structural disadvantages. Social workers have a responsibility to bring to the attention of those in power and the general public, and where appropriate, challenge the ways in which the policies or activities of government, organisations or society create or contribute to structural disadvantage, hardship and suffering, or militate against their relief. With such a foundation, NGOs and government agencies will be in position to give special attention to remote and excluded regions in the country.

Conclusion

This study sought to investigate how and with what results NGOs in Uganda have experimented with the child-sensitive social protection approach. It established that supporting children’s access to education is the most common child-specific area of intervention among NGOs in Northern Uganda. It has been argued that although the Ugandan government introduced the free universal education policy as early as 1997, there are numerous barriers that limit children’s enrolment, retention and school attendance. To address these barriers, a number of NGOs are involved in the provision of education grants, scholastic materials, school feeding and other forms of support to enable vulnerable children attend school. The interventions are, nonetheless, very limited in scope and only a few seem to be sustainable. The study has suggested that social workers have a cardinal role to play so that social protection interventions address the needs of children in a comprehensive and sustainable manner.

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Integrating Social Work Services into Schools: A Case for School Social Work in Uganda

Ronald Luwangula and Sabrina Riedl

Introduction

This article presents and discusses the empirical findings of a study on the living environments of school-going children in Uganda and their impact on educational success and dropout rates. Furthermore, new avenues in introducing social work services in Ugandan schools shall be explored. The fact that the social work profession in Uganda requires further strengthening and enhancement notwithstanding, the article pursues visionary territory in the search of a culturally and contextually relevant form of community-based school social work. The article starts with an outline of the problem, followed by an overview of Uganda's school system. Thereafter, the research approach and methodology are presented. Then the study findings are introduced alongside considerations on the respective roles and responsibilities of social workers in schools. In the concluding section, the authors reflect on the potentials of strengthening social work roles in education.

International and national agreements vs. the reality on the ground

Since the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights in 1948, the right to education has been refined in an ongoing series of international declarations and conventions. Uganda is a State party to the international treaties including but not limited to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (since 1990) and the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (since 1987) which all explicitly articulate the fundamental right to education. At the national level, the country's commitment to the improvement of education services is articulated in the Uganda Constitution of 1995 (article 34), the Children Act (CAP 59, 2000), and the Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE) policies, among others. Education is perceived as a main pillar or catalyst for social development and poverty reduction by increasing people's chances of living a healthy life, deepening the foundations of democracy, building awareness towards protecting the environment, and empowering women (UNESCO, 2014, 22).

In reference to the above mentioned empirical study, the findings indicate that the realities characterising the public education system in Uganda do not seem to rhyme with and/or to fulfil the above mentioned on-paper aspirations and commitments. Uganda's public education on many fronts perpetuates school dropout, instead of providing high quality education that would help learners to fulfil their potential, develop into confident and responsible citizens and lead fulfilling lives. An appalling 18.9% of Ugandan children aged six to 12 years are denied their right to access primary education (UBOS, 2013, 22). According to the Uganda National Household Survey, only 5% of 13-year-olds completed the primary cycle in 2009/10 on time, indicating that repetition and dropout rates increased with the enrolment expansion (Uganda Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, 2013, 19). For poor households, the related costs to schooling (uniforms, scholastic materials and midday meals) still constitute a major obstacle to school attendance and lead to a situation in which education competes with spending on other basic needs like health care or nutrition.

According to the Ugandan Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), slightly more than half of the 34.1 million population of Uganda is below 15 years of age (UBOS, 2012, 126). This very youthful society can be assessed as offering a lot of potential on the one hand and as a "ticking demographic time bomb" (Kamya, 2014) on the other, if denied access to quality education and eventual jobs – a situation in which many find themselves hopeless and without prospects. Despite various efforts and the implementation of national and international strategies to significantly increase school enrolment rates, the net enrolment ratio for children between six and 12 years of age stands at 81.1 (UBOS, 2013, 22).

Where one lives, either in a rural or urban area; the socioeconomic background; the educational level of parents or guardians; and if one is born a boy or a girl, still predetermines one's school career in Uganda. One in five rural residents in Uganda has not had any formal education. Children from poorer households are less likely to enrol in primary school. In Northern Uganda, a region deeply affected by 20 years of insurgency, the literacy rate among the female population is almost half of their male counterparts (UBOS, 2003, 12-17). All these challenges underpin the need for the introduction of social work services into Uganda's public education.

In 1997, Uganda introduced the Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy, followed by the Universal Secondary Education (USE) policy, a decade later in 2007. Both policies have the aim of giving all children free access to basic education. Next to the aspiration of increasing enrolment rates, the policies are supposed to level inequalities in education, which are based on the socioeconomic status of families or gender differences (Twikirize, 2012).

Significant gains and progress in school access notwithstanding, appalling disparities remain between rural and urban settings, between boys and girls, and between children from affluent and disadvantaged backgrounds. Our empirical study clearly revealed that children living in poverty, working children, children with disabilities, children from child-headed households, and children in post-conflict situations stand out significantly

in their need for extraordinary educational and psycho-social support in order to succeed in school or, in many cases, simply to stay in school.

A study conducted by UWEZO East Africa in 2014, in which 350,000 children in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda (aged 6 to 16 years) were evaluated with regard to their abilities to perform basic literacy and numeracy tasks, revealed that children from poorer households consistently achieve lower competency levels (UWEZO, 2014). The disillusioning outcome of this assessment ranks Uganda lowest among the three East African countries in learners' achievements and even speaks about a school system which "produces" illiterate and semi-literate children (UWEZO, 2014, 5). Unidirectional political efforts and interventions which solely focus on an increase in enrolment rates or quantities without reflecting on issues of social justice, the quality of public education or learning outcomes, will certainly not efficiently contribute to building "vibrant economies and creative democracies" (UWEZO, 2014, 5) or enhance social cohesion.

Uganda's education system at a glance

Uganda's education system encompasses pre-primary, primary (seven years), secondary (four years of ordinary level and four years of advanced level), university and tertiary education. Pre-primary schooling is purely private and vaguely regulated by government, while primary, secondary, university and tertiary education all have a public-private mix. Uganda undoubtedly has made remarkable advances in the education sector at the different levels.

Pre-primary education, by its nature, is the preserve of children whose parents can afford to pay for it; it is more pronounced in urban than rural settings and the curriculum lacks standardisation. Most poor and vulnerable children hardly access this service compared to their affluent counterparts. This puts the former's early childhood development at risk. Yet, school attendance is very much appreciated as "a 'vaccine' against violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect" (Save the Children Sweden, 2011, 24).

The introduction of UPE saw unprecedented quantitative gains (enrolment explosion) marked by gross primary school enrolment raising from 3.1 million children in 1996 to 7.6 million in 2003 (145% increase) compared to a 0.9 million increase (39%) between 1986 and 1996 (ODI Policy Brief 10, 2006). However, the UPE programme has sustained a mismatch between quantitative gains and qualitative improvements, let alone the decried discouraging teaching and learning conditions that characterise public primary schools in Uganda to date (UWEZO, 2012). According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2011), the Uganda primary school dropout rate for the period 2002-2011 stood at 68.2%.

At secondary level, the situation is no better despite the introduction of USE in 2007, leading to a boost in enrolment from 24% to 34% over the last six years of programme implementation (EFA Uganda Country Profile, 2012). USE involves government's subsidisation of secondary education for learners that meet the requisite grades. For the period 2002-2011, the gross enrolment ratio at secondary level was 28% (UNDP, 2011), while the net enrolment ratio recorded over the period 2005-2009 was 22% and 21% for male and female children, respectively (UNICEF, 2011). The net secondary school

attendance ratio, however, dropped to 16% for male and 15% for female children within this period (UNICEF 2011, 112), while only 12% of the school-aged children completed the secondary school cycle (EFA Uganda Country Profile, 2012). Even as Uganda appreciates education as the most important economic opportunity children can ever have (Uganda Poverty Status Report, 2012), many children are far from their dream of harnessing it. This state of affairs reasonably justifies the appeal for an “education paradigm shift where education planners have to look beyond counting the number of children sitting in classrooms and start to focus on learning” (Watkins, 2013).

This brief situation analysis provides the rationale for a reflection on the role of social work in the education sector in Uganda. Integrating professionally trained social workers into schools and having them work side by side – in an interdisciplinary team and in a participatory manner – with teachers, families, the communities, the children themselves, as well as with political and religious leaders as equal partners, could make a difference. School social work is regarded as a “social innovation” (Baier and Deinet, 2011, 9) in tackling pervasive poverty and developing local capacity for enhanced social development. As a next step, we refer to a study which was purposely conceptualised to provide the empirically based link between the school environment, the overall living conditions of children and the potential role of social work.

Research approach and methodology

In 2013, a team of Austrian researchers conducted a qualitative study titled “Socio-educational Support for School Going Children in Uganda – From Empirical Evidence to Concrete Action”.¹ In close collaboration with Ugandan project partners, including civil society organisations (such as Gulu District NGO Forum, Anaka Foundation, Uganda Youth Development Link) and higher education institutions (Makerere University and Gulu University), the living environments of school-going children were scrutinised. The study intended to realise the following objectives:

- Assess the living environments of school-going-children pertaining to their educational opportunities, with a particular focus on the challenges, conditions, needs and interests of a post-conflict society;
- Explore the role of gender pertaining to equality of educational opportunities;
- Appraise the potential of developmental school social work in enhancing the quality of education and reducing the number of pupils dropping out of school;
- Explore the potential specific roles and tasks that could be undertaken by professional social workers in order to provide socio-educational support for school-going children in Uganda, with a particular focus on the aftermath of the conflict in Northern Uganda.

The study was conceptualised as qualitative, exploratory, descriptive and comparative. The study areas were Gulu and Anaka in Northern Uganda, a post-conflict and rather rural setting, and Uganda’s capital Kampala, being the urban counterpart. Due to the fact that school social work is a very new and innovative field of social work which is not

¹ The researchers were Sabrina Riedl and Helmut Spitzer from Carinthia University of Applied Sciences (CUAS), Austria. The research was funded by an internal research fund provided by CUAS.

established yet in the Ugandan context, the use of a qualitative-exploratory approach was essential. This approach paved the way for flexibility and reflexivity which were regarded as very important requirements in regard to “conquering” a new field of social work. The research was conceptualised jointly by local Ugandan researchers, Ugandan social work practitioners and the researchers from Austria. The phase of transcribing and thoroughly analysing empirical data was handled by mutual efforts of the authors of this article.

The study was conducted in a self-empowering and participatory manner, bearing in mind the particular living conditions of the target group of school-going children, the youth and their parents. Voluntary participation based on prior informed consent was a key guiding principle in determining inclusion of study participants. The research approach was partly influenced or inspired by arts-based research methods (Barone and Eisner, 2012; Leavy, 2009) which were considered to be particularly useful for younger pupils (Primary levels 2 or 3). We took into consideration rural-urban divides and employed a gender lens during the implementation of the study.

The study sample consisted of 17 key informants, 50 teachers and headteachers, 24 parents or guardians, 33 social work practitioners, as well as 153 school-going children (primary levels 3, 5, 6 and 7, and secondary levels 2 and 5). The inclusion of learners of these specific grades was based on the fact that enrolment rates are very high in primary 1 and 2, but start to decline from primary 3 onwards. Additionally it was anticipated that some years of school experience will qualify children to assess the correlation between their living and school environments. The respective secondary levels were selected on the consideration that pupils have settled into their secondary schools or are about to complete, thus, a well-informed perception was anticipated. The study sample was selected by the above mentioned Ugandan project partners, whilst paying attention to a hybrid composition of targeted respondents. Data was collected through focus-group discussions (with teachers, parents/guardians, school-going children and social work practitioners) as well as personal guided interviews (with key informants, headteachers, and partly with social work practitioners). Other key informants comprised of lecturers from Makerere University’s Department of Women and Gender Studies, the Department of Social Work and Social Administration, Gulu University, child protection specialists, local community development officers, and officials from the Ministry of Education and Sports. This versatile composition of the study sample was aimed at presenting a comprehensive picture of the perceptions of various stakeholders in the school careers of primary and secondary school-going children. For purposes of trustworthiness of data, respective secondary materials were thoroughly analysed before, during and after the fieldwork. The data analysis was based on the thematic analysis, following the five steps of knowing, coding, theming, selecting and committing (Hardwick and Worsley, 2011, 126).

This qualitative study facilitated an insight into the situation on the ground and offered an interpretation of the available abstract statistics depicting the wanting education quality in Uganda. Below we present a brief highlight of the study findings.

The reality on the ground – study findings

The findings reflect the reality of the living environments of school-going children and their impact on educational success and dropout rates. The themes which emerged from the study will next be discussed.

Pervasive poverty

For most children in public schools (both primary and secondary), their education success is significantly hampered by hunger, long distances to and from school, limited support from families, and absence of role models, among other things. Learning on empty stomachs (from 7:30 am to 6:00 pm), aggravated by trekking long distances every day were pronounced major obstacles to pupils' retention in school. The situation is much more unbearable among the younger ones who get tired and drop out. Access to lunch at school (when it is provided) is based on ability to pay, which unfortunately many were found unable to do considering that public schools are predominantly the preserve of the poor and vulnerable children.

According to the Ugandan Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (2011), approximately 51% (8.1 million children) in Uganda are either critically or moderately vulnerable, while 63% live with caregivers other than their biological parents. Referring to the year 2010, the ministry speaks of at least one orphan in every four households and three million children living below the poverty line.

The impact of poverty and children's education is evident in the following quote of an official of *Ker Kwaro Acholi*:

In some areas we also still have distances, from home to school, the roads that are maybe impassable (...). The labour that is needed to ensure that there is enough food. Because what is a basic here – education does not become a basic, education becomes a luxury almost, or a privilege, but the basic to the family is food. So if in that scenario the children will be asked: 'You need to go and farm before you go to school. This week you are not going to go to school, we need to clear up this garden.' (...) The child misses a number of days, a number of weeks and each day that the child misses going to school, the child becomes less and less interested in going to school and eventually she stops or he stops and the parent is not bothered about that.²

The education system perpetuates inequality

Uganda's education system was found to perpetuate inequality rather than strive to minimise it. The poor and vulnerable children who essentially form the majority are not adequately reached by the public school system. At primary level, UPE which is expected to guarantee every primary school-age child an opportunity for school is far from achieving that, let alone the decried quality of education it offers to those that succeed in accessing it. The programme is marked with auxiliary costs which are not affordable to all. Costs for school uniforms, scholastic materials, sanitary materials, feeding, and PTA (Parents-Teachers' Association) fees, borne by each child make UPE exclusionary. Furthermore, the insensitivity of the programme to the unique needs and multiple vulnerabilities suffered

² Acholi Cultural Support Initiative, personal interview: Gulu, 10 July 2013.

by children in particularly difficult circumstances automatically disqualifies them. Many of these vulnerable children, for instance, children in child-headed households, impoverished households and under the care of the elderly essentially drop out prematurely. The exclusionary nature of the education system in part explains the significant mismatch between quantitative gains in enrolment over the years and retention, dropout and overall quality, following the inception of UPE.

Related to the perpetuation of inequality in schools, the pupil-teacher ratio was found to be overwhelming and undermining the capacity of teachers to offer quality education. The big numbers of pupils in schools make it hardly possible for teachers to attend to the personal needs of each learner. As reported by some respondents, fast learners cope with relative ease while slow learners and learners with special needs are normally left behind or excluded. The congestion in classrooms was cited to be affecting the concentration capacity of learners. The big numbers of learners also make teachers unable to give feedback to the learners' assignments, hence making progressive assessment very minimal. Due to these circumstances, teachers' endeavours to attend to some of the learners' "non-class" needs face tremendous restrictions. This reality precipitates a phenomenon of "survival of the fittest" – learners in need of special attention tend to suffer from exclusion instead of being given the needed support to catch up with the others. In this regard, the deputy headteacher of a secondary school in Gulu, Northern Uganda stated:

This is a situation where one teacher is teaching over 100 students in one classroom. You cannot cater for individual differences. That is a big challenge and you cannot assess the students properly.³

The multifaceted role of the school social worker implies supporting learners in addressing the difficulties that keep them from performing well in school. By applying social work skills and values, the root causes of the learner's problems can be assessed and thus effective intervention plans can be developed collaboratively among teachers, parents/guardians and the respective students. Social workers, through their professional ethics, apply a strengths-based and comprehensive approach, understanding the learner within the intertwining contexts of community, school and family (Openshaw, 2008).

Education is not exclusively about passing exams and cramming facts and figures; it needs to pay attention to the child as a whole being: body, mind, soul, interests, needs and talents, as well as the child's living environments. In order to successfully support children in their education, in their socialisation and growing up, one needs to pay attention to life skills as well, besides the necessary facts and figures. Social workers' skills and knowledge mandate them to undertake such responsibilities.

Gender disparities

The pilot study uncovered that while both boys and girls are affected by their socioeconomic environments, girls bear an additional brunt and they are more at risk of dropping out of school than boys. During their menstruation cycle, for instance, many girls are induced to stay away from school due to lack of money to buy the necessary sanitary towels. School

³ Personal interview: 9 July 2013.

absenteeism which is punishable in turn pushes some into early school dropout. During their menstrual periods, besides feeling embarrassed among peers and being laughed at, many girls feel insecure to open up to any adult at school for help, in addition to dealing with the absence of private and safe places at school where they can change the sanitary towels. The school environment, thus, becomes frustrating and discouraging. The situation was found to be worsened by a culture that does not favour parents discussing issues of sexuality with their children. Essentially, many children are left to figure out how to handle such difficult issues on their own.

Furthermore, due to traditionally and socially ascribed gender roles, girls bear a heavier burden than boys in terms of household chores, taking care of younger siblings and sick or elderly family members. This robs the girls of their school time, leading to increasing absenteeism and eventual dropout, as compared to boys. Girls are thus seen to take up adult roles when in actual sense they should also be taken care of as children.

Family members and the community's cultural imperatives put subtle pressures on the girl child, pushing them into early marriages regarded as some sort of income-generating activity, since the bride price is lucrative for people struggling for survival on a daily basis. One female teacher of a primary school in Kampala illustrated the situation as follows:

Another cause [of school dropout] is early marriages. You find some parents, especially in villages, leave alone here in Kampala where at least parents know the value of education. In the rural areas when the girl develops some breasts, the parents feel their daughter is ready for marriage. Thus, the child is married off young while she still has the passion for learning. But there is no one to intervene for her. The parents' word is final since they will get dowry from her marriage.⁴

Early pregnancy, which is not an uncommon phenomenon in Uganda, makes matters worse. It means automatic induced early marriage for most girls. As soon as a young girl is found pregnant, she is suspended from school. The worst part of it is that like the school, the family is hardly lenient to the young mother, but rather forces her into early marriage. Our empirical data clearly revealed that supportive structures that would advocate for these girls are mainly missing. School social work could play an important role in levelling gender disparities and ensuring that the child's future is not terminated prematurely on such grounds.

Hostile school environment and violence through school disciplinary regimes

Despite the declaration of corporal punishment as illegal by the Ugandan government, it still goes on as daily routine in many schools, predominantly taking the form of caning pupils considered to act contrary to the school rules and set academic grades. Two teachers of Peche Prison Primary School, Gulu District, made a remark in line with this:

Another thing is that in some schools there is what we call corporal punishment and this makes the school environment very hostile for the learners. So they drop out.

The reason [for school dropout] I would give is that some teachers do torture children and humiliate them. (...) So some children, at times, due to minor mistakes like coming to

⁴ Personal interview: 23 July 2013.

school late, are harassed and humiliated by some of the teachers, which makes them drop out of school.⁵

Generally the school disciplinary system takes a punitive dimension, with teachers more preoccupied with ensuring that children live to the standards set than paying due attention to what lies behind students' inability to adhere to the defined school rules. Empirical evidence revealed that for many children, several realities stand in their way. Some walk daily from as far as ten kilometres and are expected to reach school by 8.00 a.m. Such children are likely to fall victim of caning and other punishments for being late and performing poorly. The same applies to children who are living alone, coming from child-headed or poor households. Before coming to school, they need to complete some household chores. One male pupil from St. Peter's Primary School in Kampala illustrates this by saying:

For me, some students are told to go to fetch water, cook food, wash clothes and bath the other little siblings. She will not get time to read her books. Some of us wake up very early to go fetch water from the well, and it is very far from home and that makes us come late for school. Then we are made to clean the school since you are late for school.⁶

School social work could offer a possibility for not only a reconsideration of such 'educational' methods but also sensitise the teachers to equally attend to the realities of the children's living environments. Embracing school social work would allow for a holistic approach that pursues interest in both educational success and living environment and takes into consideration the person as a whole.

Teachers' challenges

To a great extent, the teaching profession does not find a lot of recognition in the Ugandan social context. Despite their very responsible position of educating children and youth, their low remuneration frequently causes strikes. The teachers' socioeconomic standing and their compromised living conditions frequently lead to a struggle in attending to their own children's needs. Evidently, this situation undermines their capacities in attending to learners' needs.

Furthermore, the teacher-training in relation to a holistic approach of learners was regarded as questionable and lacking on several fronts by many respondents. Whereas their training particularly orients them to attend to learners' "classroom" needs, it is so evident that the barriers to children's good performance, attendance and retention by far transcend "classroom" needs. This leaves them ill-suited to address other needs outside the school system. In addition, the training that these teachers acquire instils a sense of vertical hierarchy and authority which merely creates a big gap between the learners and teachers to the extent that it distorts any possibilities of free interaction between the two. In the end, the children hardly ever feel secure to express themselves towards the teachers, for example in the common event of verbal abuse or bullying by teachers and fellow learners. This leads them to act on their own and making uninformed difficult decisions with long-term effects.

⁵ Personal interviews: 11 July 2013.

⁶ Personal interview: 22 July 2013.

Generally, quality education is supposed to enable learners to critically reflect on the broader societal concerns and challenge the status quo. Incidentally, the teacher-centred schooling provided does not prepare learners to come up with their own ideas, innovations and solutions to their own problems and societal problems. One NASWU⁷ official decried such a system by saying:

Teachers don't want to be challenged. We are indoctrinated that the teacher knows it all. So when you challenge a teacher academically, it is seen as indiscipline, you are not given time to think critically. (...) So students are not given the chance to think critically, outside the box. This is making people not to think out of the box, even at work places, people only think within their work scope and do not widen their scope of reasoning since it's considered as being too ambitious.⁸

The diversity of needs of learners which stretch beyond the classroom needs are inadequately addressed and, in some cases, neglected by teachers, which makes the role of school social workers evidently necessary and urgent.

Curriculum inadequacies

Many respondents described the school curriculum as archaic and as dating back to the colonial era, hence, falling short of equipping learners with the necessary skills and knowledge to successfully respond to the local contemporary challenges. Many respondents argued that the alignment of basic education is way too theoretical to make the pupils competitive enough to succeed on the local labour market. One NASWU official regards that as one major constraint to the delivery of high quality education in Uganda:

I think children are really learning things that are not relevant to them. (...) Not much space is given to developing a child as a whole, which is bringing out their talents, capabilities and skills.⁹

In turn, learners easily lose interest in learning and tend not to see the value of education as they cannot apply learning to their living conditions. The attraction of "fast money", for example, through brick-laying, is considered as making more sense than the long process of education that anyway might just result in unemployment. In many cases, such attitude is backed by parents' similar perceptions as well as the absence of role models in many families.

Disjointed school stakeholders

Our study clearly revealed that many schools handle their daily issues such as school governance, including resource mobilisation and use, children's learning environments, discipline, feeding and the like far apart from the community, the parents and even the school-going children themselves. There is a big gap between these important stakeholders who are actually required to actively participate in shaping an environment that is conducive for the children to learn.

⁷ NASWU = National Association of Social Workers Uganda.

⁸ Personal Interview: Kampala, 26 July 2013.

⁹ Personal Interview: Kampala, 26 July 2013.

Partly because of this gap between these prime school stakeholders, some of the respondents stated that the respect for teachers from community members has been gradually decreasing in the recent years. Many parents and/or guardians do not acknowledge the supportive role that they should be offering to the children despite repeated calls by teachers. There is no clear actor to facilitate collaboration between these different sub-systems in the interest of the child but also to support the realisation of the mandate of the school.

Peculiar situation of post-conflict Northern Uganda

Uganda's northern region is distinct from the rest of the country (which is divided into four geographical regions: north, central, west and east). From 1986 until 2006 it was shaken by a war between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the government forces. Throughout these protracted insurgencies, between 25,000 and 30,000 children were abducted and forced to serve as child soldiers while many others were forced to move into internally displaced people's camps which were supposed to serve as protected villages. Up to today, these long-lasting insurgencies are having a significant impact on a widely traumatised society and on infrastructure and development.

Education plays a vital role in post-conflict societies; it is supposed to equip pupils with the skills and knowledge they need to successfully recover and rebuild their communities (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2011). Post-war Northern Uganda provides an even more unique context with peculiar situations which apparently can inform school social work's knowledge base and practice.

Child-headed households

The unique phenomenon of child-headed households is quite pervasive in Northern Uganda due to the long-lasting insurgency. It is a phenomenon which is associated with HIV/AIDS as well and, thus, pervasive within the whole of Uganda. Child-headed households refer to children below the age of 18 who have lost both parents and have been left with no alternative but to fall under the care and guardianship of their elder siblings. Needless to say, such extremely challenging living environments tend to have devastating effects on the life and behaviour of the learners. One of the headteachers interviewed in Gulu stated:

When you see the conditions of these children, they are not pleasing, because they first of all look malnourished; they are not well dressed; they lack writing materials. And these are the conditions that make a child vulnerable in learning because the mind is not stable and the child has learning difficulties as the child is thinking from time to time: What am I going to eat at home? How am I going to get some of these materials I am lacking.¹⁰

Furthermore, the post-war situation in Northern Uganda accounts for a situation where the survivors tend to have many relatives and other dependents to take care of. The children of the victims of war who by slim luck escaped falling into child-headed households are now under the care of economically struggling subsistent extended families. Practically, in the event of scarce household resources that have to be shared among all dependents,

¹⁰ Personal interview: 11th July 2013.

biological children take precedence while the “adopted/foster children” trail. This situation tends to demoralise and frustrate these foster children who reportedly lack the necessary family education support and opt to fight for survival through child labour.

Growing up in refugee camps

In the context of the two decades of war in Northern Uganda, respondents explained that socialising a whole generation within highly congested refugee camps led to a loss of cultural knowledge and a tendency of learned helplessness. Because of the ubiquitous risk of being abducted by the LRA rebels and the resultant forced idleness and reliance on handouts from international donors, the affected people continue. The deputy headteacher of a secondary school in Gulu District stated:

This war made it worse in that many grew up in camps and they have not learnt to be productive because they are used to the free things that were being brought to these camps to feed people there. So, they did not have an opportunity to be productive, so now we have a big challenge. The parents have resorted to heavy drinking; they do not have the motivation of hard working.¹¹

At the centre of this reality are children whose education opportunities are in jeopardy.

Psychological and educational needs of post-conflict learners

Most of the current school-going children in Northern Uganda were born during the LRA insurgency whose psychological effects remain fresh in the lives of these learners amid no professionals such as social workers within school settings to offer the needed support. As reported by a score of study participants, this not only exposes learners to erratic concentration but also helplessness and eventual dropout. For some children so lucky to have had their parents survive the fierce war, this incidentally has not guaranteed them educational support from their parents. Many of the parents became too used to aid over the 20 years of war and have never recovered from dependency and so they remain no source of pride for the children as far as their education is concerned.

School social workers can reach out to the families and to the communities and try to mobilise their resources in order to better meet the needs of students. They could launch education awareness campaigns in communities or try to support families with regard to income-generating activities (e.g. school gardens), most probably in collaboration with other community-based NGOs.

Children living with HIV/AIDS and children with disabilities

As a result of the two-decade war, many children fell victim of HIV/AIDS as well as disability and deformities caused by the cutting off arms, hands, feet and ears by the rebels. Whereas some of these children managed to get absorbed into the school system, access to the needed support is far from attainable in most of the public schools attended by these children. The sensitivity of the teachers and school administrators to the plight of these children is questioned in view of their (teachers’) training which is less tailored to such needs. Furthermore, the teachers’ personal experiences in the context of the war pose

¹¹ Personal interview: 11 July 2013.

a big challenge in handling learners professionally. Essentially, both the learners and the teachers remain in need of more or less similar psycho-social support services that would help them to cope with the glaring effects of trauma. Amidst the psychological torment that school-going children who became victims of war go through, schools lack any structured form of professional help for them.

Overall, the findings indicate that there is particular absence of support systems to enable children realise their education needs within and outside the school setting. More pertinent to note is the absence of a structured action system which could bridge the gap in the repelled actions of and relationship between disjointed actors – the schools, families, communities and the learners themselves – as well as advocate the children's rightful treatment.

Introducing social work services into Uganda's education system

Social work's mandate and responsibilities are to enhance people's well-being, the promotion of human rights and social justice, whilst paying particular attention to marginalised people in avoiding their exclusion (Huxtable *et al.*, 2012, 232). Social workers play a vital role in enhancing social development which is firmly anchored in human rights and puts sustainability at the core (Midgley, 2014). Through a social development approach (Midgley, 2014), unbalanced social development shall be addressed by "harmonising economic and social interventions within a pragmatic state-directed approach" and by doing that enable transformative change (Midgley, 2014, 10). Likewise, education is pivotal in the development of human potential through facilitating values, knowledge and skills. High quality education serves as the basis for the positive development of individuals, communities and the society at large and, thus, lays the foundation for escaping the hardships of poverty.

In the contemporary increasingly fast changing world, the potential of vivid and egalitarian cooperation between these two intertwining professions and disciplines is evident. Huxtable *et al.* (2012, 232) call social work and education "complementary professions". Social workers, through mobilising the resources and strengths of school-going children, teachers, parents and communities, are well equipped to support education in tackling problems which negatively impact the access to schools, school attendance and educational success.

School social work as "a specialized area of practice within the broad field of the social work profession" (School Social Work Association of America, 2005, cited in Constable, 2009, 3) originated from the UK in the late 19th century – directly followed by the US in the early 20th century (Huxtable *et al.*, 2012, 236). Its initial mandate was to enhance and maintain school attendance of truant learners.

On the African continent, school social work is a growing specialty and is – to the best of our knowledge – so far practiced in Ghana and South Africa only.¹² In Uganda, it is a rather unexplored field, whilst the country's education crisis makes social work services

¹² For Ghana, see Huxtable *et al.* (2012). For South Africa, see Ntombela (2011).

in schools very necessary and urgently needed, as the empirical section above firmly ascertained.

This study unveiled that school children are faced with a number of preventable conditions that lead them to detest, and exposing many to dropout. These conditions have implications for potential roles of school social workers in Uganda.

School social work has the potential to achieve the holistic development of the growing child, can help to promote equal educational opportunities, enhance the quality of education, and promote sustainable social development. As the empirical study reveals, it is impossible to sufficiently meet educational goals without taking into consideration a complex range of factors that inhibit learning and which cannot be adequately addressed through the classroom alone. Ugandan schools present many issues that call for the expertise of social work professionals. Ideally, their roles and responsibilities should be broad and flexible; they should be collaborating in an interdisciplinary team with the teachers and school management committee and support the school in realising *Education for All* targets (UN, 2014). In close collaboration with the target groups comprising school-going children, parents, extended families, teachers and communities, the problems that restrain learning need to be addressed. Furthermore, preventive measures should be established in order to address various social and health problems targeting their roots and thus ensure that children at risk are paid attention in a timely manner. This can be realised through working within the school system and, thus, being present and approachable at schools on a regular basis. Additionally, social workers' presence at schools on a regular basis enables close working relationships with school staff, joint planning and the realisation of mid- and long-term projects and activities, co-creating an environment and/or school culture that is conducive to learning, as well as reaching out to communities to develop partnerships and networks (Huxtable *et al.*, 2012).

Constable (2009, 20), citing Costin (1973), identifies seven broad groups of functions and roles of school social workers, namely: direct counselling with individuals, groups, and families; advocacy; consultation; community networking; interdisciplinary team coordination; needs assessment; and programme and policy development. The concerns and focus of school social work are very compelling. Constable (2009, 4) acknowledges that the development of children and schools supporting their development is a top public priority; failure and non-fulfilment of the corresponding effective programmes, policies and aspirations particularly demonstrate the gap to be fulfilled by school social workers. School social work has the mandate for social development and is, thus, dedicated to the inclusion of the marginalised and towards raising standards for educational outcomes (*ibid.*). It ought to be recalled that these are some of the core challenges Uganda's education system is grappling with.

Launch of a pilot project in Anaka, Northern Uganda

Based on the empirical study mentioned in this article, it was possible to arrange for funds to start up a pilot project titled "Psycho-social and material support of school-going children in post-conflict Northern Uganda: Implementation of a pilot project on community-based school social work". The lead agency is a grassroots organisation and

NGO based in Anaka, Nwoya District, which has a profound knowledge about the Acholi sub-region.¹³ Two social work professionals were employed (one male, one female) who reach out to nine primary schools in the district. They provide psycho-social support, work with families and communities to raise their awareness on the value of education, and try to mobilise local people to more actively participate in the education of their children. The time frame of the pilot project is 18 months, but it is hoped that the service will be institutionalise after that. A mid-term and final evaluation will take place after nine months and at the end of the project period, respectively. In the first quarter of the project period (March to June 2014), a thorough assessment of the living and learning environments of the pupils of the nine selected primary schools was conducted, with 131 most vulnerable learners identified and supported by the team. The seemingly “I don’t care-attitude” of many parents in taking care of their children was revealed as one priority matter of concern for the school social workers.

Conclusions

The empirical findings of our study clearly reveal the correlation between children’s living environments and their respective educational opportunities, retention in schools, and educational performance. At the same time, these living environments, to a great extent, are not taken into consideration in Uganda’s public education system. Given the miserable situations at schools, teachers have neither time nor adequate capacity to cater for different levels of need. Currently Uganda’s public education system seems to reach “the tip of the iceberg” only; poor and vulnerable children, as well as children with disabilities are mainly excluded. In many cases, their disadvantageous starting points are even further exacerbated in school.

By leaving out the social work perspective in schools, the Ugandan government risks continuously aggravating the problems of non- or semi-educated people who find themselves with limited prospects and, thus, promoting a two-class society where a few privileged succeed, while the masses remain deprived. Integrating social work services into schools has cost implications, but its positive impact and innovative potential will be seen in a number of social benefits which indeed imply long-term economic advances. The foundational role of not merely being in school, but also sensibly learning and educational attainment in enhancing the population’s participation in a country’s economic life, contributing to economic growth, is consistently agreed upon by several authors (cf. Watkins, 2013; Lloyd and Hewett, 2003, 2; Sen, 1999). Through the inclusion of social work services in Uganda’s education system, many vulnerable children will be enabled to remain in school; have their psychological needs attended to; have their “non-classroom” needs listened to; and have their parents engaged and encouraged to support their children’s education.

The successful introduction and establishment of school social work services in Uganda or East Africa at large requires a great deal of advocacy, given the meagre resources allocated to both education and social services. In this context, application-oriented

¹³ Northern Uganda is also frequently called Acholi sub-region, due to the ethnic group of Acholi who form the majority there.

basic research plays a vital role in creating policies that would enhance knowledge and methodology in order to grant professionalism and effective interventions right from the beginning, and/or in setting up professional standards and educational requirements for school social work. The formation of an association that could actively lobby, inform and sensitise stakeholders or to have existing general associations that take over that task could help to promote this truly visionary and ambitious initiative (Huxtable *et al.*, 2012).

As mentioned earlier, school social work was founded in the English-speaking Western world. By all means, “professional imperialism” (Midgley, 1981), through imposing this very concept on Ugandan settings, needs to be avoided. On the contrary, in order to properly and successfully introduce and strengthen social work roles in education in Uganda, a committed search for culturally responsive and contextually relevant models should get started. These should offer space and opportunities to convey indigenous understanding, knowledge and approaches that suit the particular Ugandan context. “Independent pathways based on national cultures and education traditions” (Huxtable *et al.*, 2012, 236) should be pursued. This could imply that cultural wisdom and knowledge of yesteryears should be strengthened, revitalised and customised to the given specific needs and challenges of the community. The above mentioned pilot project serves as such an initiative.

It has to be emphasised that the success of school social work initiatives firmly depends on the political will to invest in equitable education. If the Ugandan government or the respective ministries will not take the responsibility to pave the way for comprehensive educational reforms, the rich potential of school social work services will remain very limited if not futile. One key strength of social work professionals is to bring grassroots knowledge to the policy arena, to make the realities on the ground understood by political decision makers, and to act as advocates of change and political activists. It is time to diverge from individualising social problems but unveil their structural shortcomings, instead.

Finally, given the rapid social change in our contemporary societies, and the challenges of globalisation, a nation cannot afford a low quality education and a two-tier education system that leaves behind the majority of vulnerable children. Africa has the most youthful population in the world – 32% (Population Reference Bureau, 2013). There is, thus, a lot of potential which should be harnessed for a better future for children and society. Embracing school social work would allow for a holistic approach that pursues interest in both educational success and enabling children to live a full life by taking into consideration the child as a whole being. Of course, school social work cannot be the panacea for all existing challenges and problems, but it can make a significant difference.

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Social Work in a Post-war Setting: Culture and Gender Dimensions during the Recovery of the Acholi Sub-region in Northern Uganda

Julius Omona

Introduction and background

Northern Uganda has undergone a prolonged war between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Uganda government forces which greatly affected the local people's culture and gender aspects. With the advent of peace since 2006, the challenge remains how to recover from the aftermath of the war. This article is based on research undertaken to examine social workers' actions in respect to the aforementioned two aspects in Nwoya and Gulu Districts in Northern Uganda. The ethnic group of the Acholi constitutes the major population group in this region, hence, the region is referred to by their name – Acholiland.

The Lord's Resistance Army's (LRA) insurgency raged in Northern Uganda from 1986 until 2006 when the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement was signed between the LRA and the Government of Uganda. The LRA had been fighting to oust the government of President Yoweri Museveni from power. This war was fuelled by the perceived political persecution and marginalisation of the northern and eastern regions by the Museveni government, dominated by people from central and western Uganda (Omona, 2008). The war displaced a vast number of people from their homes, who were then placed in camps by the government to protect them from abduction and other atrocities by the LRA. Because of the insurgency, there were about 1.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in this region in the early 2000s (UNOCHA, 2008). The LRA terrorised anyone perceived to be sympathetic to the government and abducted children to serve as soldiers or sex slaves of the rebel commanders (Agiresaasi, 2011; Spitzer and Twikirize, 2013).

The insurgency witnessed a cultural transformation and a shift in gender roles as women stepped into the vacuum left by men during emergencies, transition and early recovery from the conflict (UNFPA, 2008). Traditionally, the Acholi society is a patriarchal one where the interests of men are prioritised over those of women. Men will take multiple wives as they deem fit. Boys are valued more than girls, and the latter are married off at an early age to provide wealth for the family. Nonetheless, the Acholi have a rich and diverse

cultural heritage. However, life in the controlled camps exposed many households to semi-urban values, which conflicted with some of the traditional cultural values.

With the signing of the peace agreement and the launching of the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (Republic of Uganda, 2007), there was a massive return of IDPs from the camps to their original homes. Many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have intervened to provide services in this recovery period (ACORD, 2011). Among the key challenges to social workers, in particular, are how to address the issues of gender and culture in this era of recovery in the Acholi sub-region of Northern Uganda.

In this article, theoretical and practical perspectives on gender and culture during a post-war period are outlined. Thereafter, the research design and methodology of a study in Northern Uganda are presented. Key findings of the study with regard to the actual and perceived response of social workers to culture and gender issues are critically discussed and linked to some recommendations for social work and social development in such a post-war context.

Theoretical and practical perspectives on gender and culture during a post-conflict period

The framing of gender dimensions in a post-conflict phase through the work of Greenberg and Zuckerman (2004; 2009) has been broadly done in three areas: women-focused activities, gender-awareness programming and gender-oriented social transformation (Omona and Aduwo, 2013). The women-focused activities emphasise women's rights, amongst other aspects (Greenberg and Zuckerman, 2004). Gender awareness programming is necessary in macro-economic activities so that there is no discrimination based on gender during post-conflict recovery interventions (Vladislavjevic and Zuckerman, 2004). Gender role transformation is necessary to cope with post-conflict challenges (Greenberg and Zuckerman, 2004). The framework implies cultural sensitivity and gender mainstreaming whilst pursuing the aforementioned three areas during post-conflict interventions (UNDP, 2001). Accordingly, the analysis of the case of the Acholi sub-region in Uganda considered the gender and cultural issues within this framework.

Culture and post-conflict recovery

Ling (2010) argues that culture is important because it shapes our world view. According to Ling (2010), understanding of a given cultural setting by social workers helps to uncover the local knowledge. Because of this, he proposes that social work education should "develop knowledge and learning relevant to local values and cultural practices by engaging in a dialogical process of mutual enrichment while debating universals" (ibid., 105). In a study by Omona and Aduwo (2013) conducted in Northern Uganda, when the service providers were asked what challenges they faced, all mentioned sociocultural factors. This finding confirms the importance of culture during the post-conflict period. Similarly, Fotana's (2006) research reveals that during the post-conflict recovery in Sierra Leone, most women participated in or desired some kind of a ritual cleansing ceremony. Coulter (2008) also reports witnessing a Kuranko girl's initiation ceremony three years after Sierra Leone's peace declaration. This was a gendered ceremony which provided

an opportunity for the Kuranko to reinstitute normalcy after extreme trauma. Coulter (2008) notes that the social significance of the ritual is particularly emphasised, and that the ceremony is not only a social event but has become a key event in reconfiguring social relations after decades of civil war.

From the foregoing, it is evident that cultural issues are still significant during post-conflict recovery. As a result of the significance of local knowledge in social work practice, Wheturangi (2010) reports that indigenous models of practice are now beginning to be acknowledged within some developed countries. It is perhaps because of its significance that the University of New York has included multicultural approaches to conflict resolution, cultural sensitivity and cross-cultural interaction among the key subjects to teach its participants.¹

The Acholi sociocultural organisations, norms and regulations are complex (Ochen, 2012). Social support inherent within extended families is still a strong form of traditional protection for the elderly and children (Ochen, Jones and McAuley, 2012). The Acholi people hold sophisticated beliefs in the spiritual world which greatly shape their perceptions of justice and reconciliation (Liu Institute for Global Issues, Gulu District NGO Forum and Ker Kwaro Acholi, 2005). *Jok* (divine spirit) and ancestral spirits guide the Acholi moral order, and when a wrong is committed, they are believed to send misfortune and illness (*cen*) until appropriate action is taken by elders and offenders. *Mato oput* (drinking of bitter herbs of the *oput* tree) is also a very important aspect of the traditional justice system (Liu Institute for Global Issues, Gulu District NGO Forum and Ker Kwaro Acholi, 2005). This is a ceremony that comes at the end of a long process of confession, mediation and payment of compensation to reconcile two clans or two parties after a murder has occurred between them. *Mato oput* is most common during the post-conflict period as communities, individuals and households committed different kinds of atrocities at various levels and there is a need for reconciliation in order to build a peaceful society. Observing cultural obligations among the Acholi is still an important aspect of people's lives.

From the foregoing issues, it is evident that culture has gained some significance in post-conflict scenarios. And yet, to date the extent of adaptation of such cultural values and models in Northern Uganda is still scanty.

Gender issues during post-conflict recovery

According to Greenberg and Zuckerman's (2004; 2009) gender framework, women-focused activities include women's rights to: (i) participate fully and effectively in decision-making, (ii) own property, (iii) work without discrimination, and (iv) live free of violence. In respect of participation, many post-conflict countries have taken steps to increase women's political participation (Greenberg and Zuckerman, 2009). Unfortunately,

¹ The post-conflict recovery courses are taught by the Department of Politics of the University of New York and draw participants from across the globe from government and non-governmental practitioners, and policy makers, as well as civil society representatives and academics together each year since 2005. More information can be obtained from <http://www.york.ac.uk/politics/centres/prdu/training/short-courses/post-conflict-recovery/> [accessed 21 August 2012].

women's representation in some post-conflict parliaments remains discouragingly low (Greenberg and Zuckerman, 2004). Regarding property ownership, one of the activities to address this is the promulgation of gender laws, where they previously did not exist, to protect the rights of women to own property such as land. Unfortunately, even where such laws have been promulgated, gender-biased practices continue to prevail (Greenberg, 1998; Kibreab, 2003). While post-conflict countries often pass new laws forbidding discrimination, employers frequently ignore them. Following wars of liberation, the Chinese and Vietnamese governments passed such laws, but compliance was weak (Vladisavljevic and Zuckerman, 2004). Life free from violence is difficult to promote and protect, yet, it is essential for ensuring women's protection and their ability to engage freely and effectively in their families and communities. People should be free to work in their fields, access markets and move to and from work without fear of attacks or gender-based violence (Greenberg and Zuckerman, 2009). But how do some of these issues manifest in the Acholi sub-region of Northern Uganda? These are some of the issues investigated in the current study.

Gender-aware programming is one of the avenues of promoting gender sensitivity in post-conflict settings in all socioeconomic sectors (Greenberg and Okani, 2001). Livelihood and employment opportunities are top priorities for constructing a viable, functional and sustainable post-conflict economy, for the realisation of peace, participation and prosperity (PPP), and for reducing unemployment, especially among the women. Unfortunately, most post-conflict formal sector employment training programmes mainly target males, missing the opportunity to engage women (Zuckerman, Dennis and Greenberg, 2007). "These measures restore stereotyped division of labour and institutionalised gender inequality" (Zuckerman, Dennis and Greenberg, 2007, 10). Traditionally, gender inequality existed in Northern Uganda, due to the patriarchal culture that favoured men. The war situation may have worsened it. The attempt of the current research was to explore and make progressive suggestions to this effect.

Gender role transformation recognises the importance of transforming gender roles in order to heal trauma, build social capital and further the goal of gender equality (Greenberg and Zuckerman, 2004). Rebuilding social capital is important because, along with physical destruction, conflict destroys trust throughout society (McMillan and Greenberg, 1998). Rebuilding positive social capital involves a gender-awareness approach that defines new roles and responsibilities and has the potential to enhance respect and collaboration, thereby strengthening new household structures (Greenberg and Zuckerman, 2009). Rebuilding social capital is important, even in time of peace. Addressing the gender-awareness approach for Northern Uganda would perhaps speed the process of transforming the society into a better place for everyone.

According to Liu Institute for Global Issues, Gulu District NGO Forum and *Ker Kwaro Acholi* (2005), Acholi women were historically defined almost exclusively in relation to their reproductive role. Socialisation of girls revolved around their preparation for the role of a wife, and later a mother. One of the most important lessons passed on to young girls was 'how to respect and care for a man'. The gendered division of labour followed. Women

were expected to care for children; tend the fields; cook and clean. In contrast, men were expected to dig, harvest, hunt, construct houses and maintain the compound.

Liu Institute for Global Issues, Gulu District NGO Forum and Ker Kwaro Acholi (2005) further state that the conflict has transformed traditional gender roles. Confined to camps, men were no longer able to fulfil traditional productive roles. Women, on the other hand, continued to be responsible for reproductive roles with an added burden of having to care for orphans and, in some cases, forced to assume a position as head of the household. According to Acholi cultural norms, boys and men were responsible for the protection of girls and women. This was no longer possible because even the boys felt insecure following their experience with the rebels. This shift persists. Accordingly, because most boys and men are insecure or have learnt violence from the LRA, they have become the greatest violators of women's personal and bodily safety. The sexual norms which once protected the virginity of girls and women before marriage, including a taboo against sex outside the institution of marriage that was believed would lead to infertility, have collapsed inside the camps as sexual violations became the norm. Sex work has become rampant as a means of survival among the girls. Many women can now afford to live without men and still take care of the family, unlike in the past when if there was man was no man, the family could not function (Liu Institute for Global Issues, Gulu District NGO Forum and Ker Kwaro Acholi, 2005). Because of frustrations and poverty, women can be seen drinking alcohol openly and getting drunk and yet this used to be the men's lifestyle. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that many marriages have broken down due to cases of husbands being battered by wives. Some of these changes in gender roles could be attributed to the global values that the local people acquired through coming into contact with some development partners while in the IDPs camps. Some of these agencies taught concepts such as gender equality, empowerment and freedom, most of which run counter to Acholi cultural values.

The above theoretical perspectives lay the ground for examining the culture and gender dimensions and their implications for social work in a post-war setting. The following sections describe the research problem and methodological aspects of the study.

Research problem, questions and scope

Much as social work plays a significant role in post-conflict situations the world over, little attention has been devoted to examining and documenting the contexts of operations. It is even more urgent to do this in Acholiland where the contribution of civil society, including social workers, has been significant after the war (Omona, 2008). Whilst the overall focus of the study was on the role of social work in poverty reduction and the realisation of Millennium Development Goals in Uganda,² gender and cultural issues were some of the key research questions and became even more pertinent in the post-war

² This study was part of a large research project undertaken in all four regions of Uganda and covering broad aspects on the role of social work in poverty reduction and the realisation of Millennium Development Goals (Twikirize *et al.*, 2013). This paper is an extract on Northern Uganda and focuses on only two aspects of gender and culture in a post-war setting. The data from Northern Uganda was independently analysed due to its unique post-war situation.

context of Northern Uganda. The specific questions related to these two aspects, which are the focus of this article, included the following:

With regard to culture issues:

What should social workers do to properly address the particular needs and challenges of the poor? Which local knowledge systems are of great importance in order to enable social workers to adequately deliver social services to their clients? Are there any plans to identify, develop and adopt indigenous knowledge in organisations implementing programmes in this region?

With regards to gender issues:

Is there a relationship between gender inequality, poverty and social development? Are the social workers aware of gender issues and the importance of promoting gender equality in order to be able to successfully reduce poverty and promote social development? What should social workers do to contribute effectively towards the promotion of gender equality in this post-conflict region?

Methodology

The study examined social workers' roles in respect to gender and cultural issues in Nwoya and Gulu Districts in the Acholi sub-region in Northern Uganda.³ The two districts were conveniently selected – Gulu representing a more urbanised population and Nwoya representing a more rural population. The mix of the two was thought to bring out a more balanced scenario of the issues under investigation in the sub-region.

The study adopted a cross-sectional design, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The quantitative approach was used to establish the magnitude of variables under investigation whilst the qualitative-exploratory aspects were deemed necessary due to the limited information documented on gender and culture in the study area. The study population consisted of social work practitioners, employers (both governmental and non-governmental), and social work clients. Each of these groups was considered important in appraising the gender and cultural aspects of interventions during this post-conflict recovery. Selection of the social work employers was made from a list of key agencies engaged in poverty reduction and social development in the study area obtained from the Community Development Office and Gulu NGO Forum.⁴ In both Gulu and Nwoya districts, each organisation selected a minimum of two respondents, namely: a social work practitioner and any other staff of the agency at managerial level, to represent the employer. In both districts, a total of 104 respondents were selected consisting of 52 social work practitioners and 52 agency representatives (executives). Two focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with social work clients – one for men and the other for women—each consisting of 10 participants. The choice of agencies from which the

³ Acholi-sub region has the following districts: Gulu, Amuru, Nwoya, Kitgum, Lamwo, Agago and Pader.

⁴ Gulu NGO Forum serves both Gulu and Nwoya Districts. Nwoya District was created out of Amuru District by an Act of Parliament and began functioning on 1 July 2010. Amuru was also initially carved out of Gulu. Most of the services in the two districts are delivered from Gulu. Most of the NGOs that work in the two districts are headquartered in Gulu.

clients were selected was random and depended on the availability and readiness of the agency to mobilise the clients. The FGDs were conducted in Lwo, the local language.

In terms of data collection methods and tools, primary data was collected through personal interviews using structured questionnaires with closed and open-ended questions for the social workers and 32 employers, while another 20 employers were subjected to in-depth interviews, using an interview guide. FGDs were held using a discussion guide to gather data on client experiences of social work services. In terms of data analysis, quantitative data were analysed using the SPSS (19) software. Thematic analysis was undertaken for data collected through FGDs and qualitative interviews. A coding scheme was developed in line with the theoretical framework and the research questions. FGD data was transcribed and analysed in English. Statistics for both districts were aggregated.

Research clearance was sought from and granted by the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST). A letter of introduction was obtained from the Uganda Government's President's Office through the UNCST and submitted to the Resident District Commissioners of the two districts. As part of the quality control measures and before actual data collection, the tools were continuously reviewed by experts on the subject matter to ensure thoroughness, relevance and clarity.

Culture and gender dimensions and their implications for social work practice

The findings are thematically presented with regard to culture and gender dimensions and their implications for social work practice and its contribution to social development and generally, post-conflict recovery.

Cultural dimensions

This sub-section examines respondents' views on what social workers need to do in order to effectively fight poverty and contribute to social development. It was generally reported by most respondents that if poverty is to be effectively addressed and post-war recovery and social development enhanced, social workers need to adopt the following as part and parcel of a culturally sensitive social work practice:

Involve the local people through bottom-up approaches: Consulting the local people is thought to enhance programme effectiveness. Employers indicated that the bottom-up approach ensures that the values and norms of the people are integrated into agency programmes, thus enhancing the project relevance and sustainability. One NGO executive referred to this approach as "community management intervention".

Cultural sensitivity: Most employers were of the view that social workers should be sensitive to the culture of the people they work with if a project they implement is to succeed. One community-based organisation's executive supported this by saying social workers should:

... appreciate and embrace the culture and tradition of the local community where they work. (...) Knowledge of the dos and don'ts and the local language are very instrumental in enabling one appreciate and embrace the culture.

Another NGO executive said studying the cultural environment is very important so that social workers will “not risk providing, for example, a piggery project to Muslims!” In emphasising cultural sensitivity, an executive of another NGO gave the example of an indecently dressed social worker who went to the community and was shunned and became the “talk of the village”. Many other employers advised social workers to embrace the cultural practices. In line with this, some agency representatives reported how they support the rituals of *mato oput* for integrating returnees in their communities. One NGO employer said they support the process by funding it, offering counselling and providing the physical necessities to the returnees.

Cultural sensitivity includes application of indigenous technology. It also includes:

...building on the local knowledge. For example you need to start with what people have so that they will be in a better position to adopt the new strategies that you introduce.

(Employer, government agency, Gulu District)

Cultural sensitivity was also viewed as embracing respect and recognition of the cultural leaders. Social workers need to “target cultural leaders who are the custodians of culture” (Employer, government agency) if they are to witness any positive change. According to social workers, the common cultural issues that confront them in their day-to-day work in this post-conflict setting include: forceful and early marriages, wife inheritance, polygamy, witchcraft, male domination in decision-making, and rights over property.

Living with people and moving services closer to them: Some employers were of the view that for social workers to address the particular needs and challenges of the poor people, they should live with the people on a day-to-day basis so as to experience what the poor people go through. As a gesture of moving closer to the people, social workers should “establish psycho-social support centres to provide counselling and other services” (Employer, NGO). This idea was similarly supported by employers from government departments.

The closer one is to the community, the closer one gets to understanding their needs and problems better, and therefore the more appropriate the strategies that one can design to respond to the identified needs/problems. (Employer, government department)

Mobilisation and sensitisation: Both male and female clients reported that social workers should be able to mobilise communities and sensitise them to, for example, change their attitudes. Sensitisation can focus on issues such as gender in order to help communities accept the changing gender roles.

Sensitisation can be done on radio or through regular meetings or workshops organised in a place accessible to the rural people. (...) The mobilisation should include organising rural people into groups. (Male FGD participant)

Sensitisation and mobilisation were seen as a means of building group pressure which can in turn ensure effective demand for services from the stakeholders.

Needs/resource identification: A dominant view shared by social work clients was that social workers should carry out needs assessment to determine the priorities and needs of the poor people. The needs assessment, according to one FGD participant, can be executed through “baseline survey or participatory means”. Other participants variously argued that

social workers should help the communities identify their own resources, understand their environment, and help the community to propose solutions to their problems.

Relevant knowledge and skills: Most respondents were of the view that for social workers to address community issues effectively, they should be well-equipped with the relevant community knowledge and skills. In case they are working in a new environment, they need to be knowledgeable about the systems and dynamics of the community, which they can achieve through appropriate training and being sensitised. When social work practitioners were asked how adequately social work training had prepared them to work in diverse cultural settings, 27% said “to a slight extent”, 38% said “sufficiently”, and 35% said “to a great extent”. This indicates some gaps in the training of social workers for a culturally relevant practice.

Advocacy and lobbying: Most employers stated that social workers should continue to play advocacy roles, to advocate services in the rural areas. An executive of one of the NGOs said:

Social workers should lobby for loans so as to enable their clients start income generating activities such as poultry, agriculture and piggyery.

In order to avoid conflicts with the prevailing norms, values and practices, however, social workers need to involve the community members even in such activities as lobbying and advocacy.

Linkage and mediation: Some respondents were of the view that social workers should effectively play the role of linking the rural people to resources in their community. Where such resources are not available, they should be referred to where they can get them. For those involved in agricultural produce, it is the responsibility of the social worker to link them to the sources of inputs, the markets and other systems. Other respondents were of the view that social workers should use their expertise to mediate on local issues such as land conflicts, which were reported to be rampant, particularly in Nwoya District.

Participation in monitoring and evaluation: Monitoring and evaluation were found to be key areas where social workers’ expertise is needed to address the particular needs and challenges of the poor within a culturally relevant manner. An executive of one of the NGOs said:

Social workers should be able to monitor the programmes that have been agreed upon, and also move according to the community’s pace.

The outcomes of monitoring and evaluation, when fed into an ongoing programme, are crucial to improving programme performance and impact.

Target interventions: All FGD participants suggested that people’s needs should be assessed and only those interventions which are considered to empower people should be implemented. The emphasis was that social workers should encourage the local communities to engage in agricultural activities as a matter of priority as this is the greatest employer in the community. “They should also be trained in modern farming methods,” added one FDG participant.

Consider rural uniqueness. It was the general view of most FGD participants that social workers should avoid generalising problems. “Projects should be handled on a case-by-

case basis and be community-specific,” an executive of one of the NGOs concurred. This is true because in social work practice, it can be observed that the needs in the urban, peri-urban and rural areas are different as is the cultural context, including aspects such as local knowledge systems.

Social work practice and local knowledge systems

Many aspects of local knowledge were identified by respondents, particularly cultural requirements and obligations as well as the local leadership structures that are critical to culturally sensitive social work practice. Some of the commonly shared insights into the knowledge systems that are important in enabling social work intervention to be relevant include the following:

Cultural requirements/obligations: This requires a thorough understanding of the beliefs, values and norms, including the local language. Employers observed that knowledge of the dos and don'ts can determine the relationships between social workers and the people they serve in the communities. They noted that the norms and values determine, for example, what food should be eaten by who and why, how to behave before elders, and many others. According to the respondents, social workers need to know these norms as anything contrary to them can generate resistance from the local community.

Knowledge of cultural ways of problem-solving or practice was noted by most employers as being very important. It was learnt from an executive of one of the NGOs that there used to be frequent accidents within Gulu municipality in a place called *Cerelenu*. The executive reported that the accidents stopped when elders slaughtered a goat to appease the spirits of the dead (*cen*) which were believed to be the cause of the frequent road carnage. To emphasise the significance of local knowledge, the same source reported that a bridge in *Paicho* Sub-county in Gulu District was repeatedly washed away by running water, a matter that puzzled even district road engineers. The matter was only resolved when elders intervened and slaughtered a white sheep to appease the evil spirits. “The bridge that was built thereafter still stands up today,” the source affirmed. Whilst these may merely be viewed as superstitious by social work professionals, respecting the people's views on such issues as well as giving them the freedom to practise them may determine the success of interventions.

It was also noted by most employers that the practice of *mato oput* is a very instrumental process of peace and reconciliation. Other respondents pointed out issues related to traditional practices such as local food preservation methods of smoking of beef and drying of root crops such as cassava and potatoes as important cultural observations which social workers have to be knowledgeable about when intervening in any of the local communities. Other practices such as sharing resources like planting materials and agricultural inputs and even shared labour (*aleya*) are common. In addition, knowledge of traditional methods of food storage like the use of granary (*dero*) is an important practice.

The traditional and cultural methods of information storage and dissemination were also noted by the majority of the employers as being important. In this region, it was found that information dissemination can be most effective through music, dance, drama and

storytelling (*ododo*). One NGO executive reported using music, dance and drama in this sub-region to communicate the voice of the children.

Knowledge of the traditional and local leadership structures: This was found to be very important in facilitating entry into the community. In the Acholi sub-region, the local leadership is in the form of the *Rwodi* (Chiefs, *Rwot* – singular). Clients participating in FGDs acknowledged that these *rwotships* and elders are very important for discipline, socialisation and cultural preservation. The religious leaders are equally important and are regularly consulted alongside cultural leaders. The knowledge of traditional structures such as the extended family system was considered very important by most FGDs participants as this can help in identifying family members in situations such as resettlement and reintegration, returning to traditional settlement areas, dealing with orphans and vulnerable children's issues and selection of beneficiaries for a specific programme.

In addition, knowledge of natural events such as dry and wet seasons helps to guide the timing and intensity of interventions. Knowledge of the informal systems such as youth groups, women's groups or other self-help groups which are forms of social capital and knowledge of formal support systems such as the Local Councils (LCs),⁵ local government structures, the police, and the medical facilities are all important for social workers.

Plans to develop and adopt indigenous knowledge: It was found that many organisations were already applying or integrating local knowledge in their programmes. Most organisations were found to observe and respect cultural practices. Such organisations were found to be using the community systems such as elders, cultural leaders, religious leaders, and other informal groups as entry points into the community. Where groups were formed, some organisations reported having relied on the local people to select the group members. Some international NGOs have reported hiring local staff, to help their organisations tap the local knowledge. Others reported involving the local community in baseline studies, project design, strategic planning and evaluation. The purpose of doing this is to ensure that the traditional and cultural knowledge is not excluded.

In particular, many organisations reported being sensitive to the cultural or traditional requirements. With their experience in Northern Uganda, one representative of an NGO that deals in agriculture had these two comments:

Like opening land, it is regarded as men's job in this society thus we targeted men for such. Also, when constructing animals' shades, the society takes this to be men's work and thus we target them for this.

We have a radio programme where we invite the paramount chief of the community to talk on cultural issues. In addition, the project design involves men and women so that their knowledge is built onto the programmes. (Employer, NGO)

When social workers were asked to what extent appreciation of culturally relevant practice affected their role in social development, 6% said "no effect", 13% said "low effect",

⁵ The LCs (Local Councils) are part of the local government structures in Uganda. The lowest structure is the LCI, the smallest political administrative unit, consisting of 50 to 70 households. This is followed by LCII, which is the parish level, made up of a number of villages. A number of parishes make up the LCIII, at sub-county level. Each of these is headed by an elected chairperson (More information can be obtained from: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/katine/2009/dec/14/local-government-explainer>).

40% said “moderately”, 31% said “high” and 10% said “very highly”. Conversely, social workers’ responses with regard to the compatibility of current models of social work with the cultural values and tradition were as follows: 2% “not at all”, 29% “less compatible”, 50% “compatible” and 19% “very compatible” (see Twikirize *et al.*, 2013 for a detailed presentation of the study findings). These figures confirm that most social workers appreciate the relevance of culture as a means of enhancing programme effectiveness. Because of this, some agencies have adopted models compatible with cultural values.

Although the above cultural issues appear to be generally good pointers for social work, they also suggest that a lot needs to be done by social workers to practically mainstream cultural issues in their interventions.

Gender dimensions

Issues on the relationship between gender, poverty and social development; gender awareness; and strategies to increase gender equity were examined in relation to social work’s role in the post-war context.

Relationship between gender, poverty and social development

Most social workers reported that they contribute to gender equality and women’s empowerment with 67% of the social workers saying that they were involved in the promotion of gender equality to a “high extent”, compared to 12% who were “not at all” involved and 21% who were “partly” engaged. These findings are consistent with employers’ responses, which are 66%, 9% and 25%, respectively. When employers engaged through in-depth interviews were asked whether there was a relationship between gender, poverty and social development, all reported in the affirmative. One executive described gender-based discrimination as a form of “social injustice”. Cultural values, largely due to the patriarchal nature of the society, inequality of opportunities, and weak public policies are seen to perpetuate poverty and the ensuing level of dismal social development in this era of recovery.

In respect to access to key resources, a female FGD participant lamented:

In this society, land is culturally believed to belong to a man. If you are married to him, you have no ownership over land.

Most female FGD participants argued that lack of access to land by women limits the productivity of land. Yet, if effectively utilised by both men and women, it would help to fight poverty and boost social development. One participant summarised it this way: “Control of land by one gender leads to under-utilisation, resulting into poverty.”

Another cultural value that is unfavourable to women is the issue of polygamy, where a man can bring as many wives as possible regardless of the means of sustaining them. One FGD participant stated:

When this value becomes widespread in the community, it leads to widespread poverty and social under-development.

A given culture where a boy is valued over a girl is also another problem. When there is a financial problem in the household, a girl is forced to drop out of school and marry to

save the household from the pangs of poverty. With respect to decision-making which is male-dominated, one FGD participant raised the issue of sexual and reproductive rights:

Women can't bargain for sex. (...) This can lead to uncontrolled births and poor spacing and this eventually leads to poverty and underdevelopment because the family may not be able to save or invest meaningfully. (Female FGD participant)

Further to the denial of sexual and reproductive rights, wealth is assumed to belong to the man and, therefore because they are the sole decision makers, they dictate how wealth should be distributed. In some homes where the women are not happy to be on the receiving side of instructions, it has led to conflicts, domestic violence and divorce.

Inequalities in opportunities were also cited as one of the main causes of poverty and underdevelopment. For example, one FGD participant said:

A girl-child isn't a priority for education. Yet if a girl isn't educated she will remain poor because she will lack the lifelong skills.

Men are noted to have more opportunities for jobs than women. One FGD participant said:

It is common also for girls to become housemaids, where the rich make them work at homes, hotels or restaurants.

Although this looks like a good opportunity in the short-run, it deprives the young girls' educational opportunities and skills, and in the long-run, the girls become trapped in poverty and underdevelopment.

Although all the respondents argued that there is a relationship between gender inequality, poverty and social development, a few also argued that gender inequality is positive and can lead to poverty eradication and enhance social development. In this regard, one male FGD member said:

Inequality has some positive elements, for example, when intervention eventually targets the gender which is socially or otherwise disadvantaged with a view to lifting it up. The best example is the 1.5 points affirmative action given to female students in Uganda as they join public universities.

Referring to the promotion of women in political positions, one male respondent noted:

Politically, women have been given political posts and all these are positive responses to lift the plight of women and are contributing to poverty eradication and social development.

Other FGD participants argued that it is not only gender inequality that breeds poverty and affects social development, but also the negative attitude of the poor, lack of access to resources and other opportunities. Hence, there seems to be an appreciation of gender aspects and how they affect social development. This means that social workers need to have adequate awareness, knowledge and skills in integrating gender issues in their interventions.

Social workers' awareness of gender issues

Asked whether the social workers are aware of gender issues and the importance of promoting gender equality in order to successfully reduce poverty and promote social development, all the agency executives said they were aware. Many of the employers

reported gender sensitivity in their staffing, having a gender desk at their agencies and non-discrimination in targeting of services to different groups of clients.

Gender is mainstreamed in the strategic plan of the organisation. As the social workers go to the communities to work, they are duty bound to help both male and female.
(Employer, NGO)

A number of agency executives, however, conceded that although their programmes are gender-sensitive, they had not developed a gender policy to guide programme implementation.

Conversely, interviewed social workers reported contributing to gender equality and empowerment of women through promotion of equal rights (48%), promotion of equal opportunities for women (13%), capacity-building for women (35%), and other activities (4%) such as advising agencies to develop gender polices advocating for human rights and the mitigation of HIV/AIDS which mostly affects women.

Strategies for promoting gender equality

When asked to mention one thing that social workers should do in order to contribute effectively towards the promotion of gender equality, employers cited a number of strategies ranging from sensitisation to interventions that challenge cultural stereotypes. The results are summarised in Table 23.1.

Table 23.1: Employers' suggested strategies for social workers to effectively contribute towards promotion of gender equality⁶

Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Sensitisation of the community	10	26%
Advocating and lobbying	6	14%
Training	4	10%
Practising gender equality	7	18%
Organising public dialogue/debate	6	16%
Research and disseminating research outcomes	3	8%
Reporting to authorities any abuse of gender	2	4%
Develop intervention that targets transforming men's cultural stereotypes	2	4%

Source: Field data, 2011

Table 23.1 shows that sensitisation was mentioned 10 times (constituting 26% of all responses) as the most appropriate strategy social workers can employ to promote gender equality. This included having radio talk-shows and organising workshops and seminars for the communities. One commonly cited area for sensitisation was domestic violence which is undoubtedly rampant in the region. Besides sensitisation, practising gender issues at the places of work was considered very critical as a way of social workers and their

⁶ Strategies mentioned by only one respondent are not included in the analysis.

employers “practising what they preach” (Male FGD participant). In respect of organising public dialogue/debate, most respondents argued that these should target policy makers, politicians and practitioners with a view to influencing policies on gender equality. Some urged social workers to play the role of advocacy for gender equality in all programmes and activities in the districts. Equally, social workers should play a more prominent role in the political arena, particularly with regard to lobbying at all levels to influence effective implementation of gender-related policies.

Training is also another strategy recommended for social workers. This training should target social workers themselves so that they are equipped with the skills and knowledge on gender issues. In addition to acquiring skills through training, social workers were challenged to conduct research on gender issues and be able to widely disseminate their findings. Other strategies include reporting gender inequality and gender-based violence to local leaders such as the LCs and traditional leaders. Interventions that target the transformation of the attitudes of such a patriarchal and chauvinist society were also deemed important undertakings by social workers. It is suggested that some cultural aspects that impede women’s development, such as preferring a boy’s education over a girl, should also be targeted.

Discussion

Based on the empirical findings, a brief discussion on cultural and gender issues in Acholi land during this post-war period is presented below.

Cultural Issues

The findings are within the post-conflict culture framework emphasised by Greenberg and Zuckerman (2004; 2009). According to the findings, cultural issues are a significant aspect during this post-war recovery period and this is consistent with other findings (Omona and Aduwo, 2013). As Ling (2010) puts it, the knowledge of culture of the local people is very important in uncovering their pattern of life. The indigenisation of social work as it is being practised elsewhere (Wheturangi, 2010) is perhaps more relevant here when referring to a society challenged by post-conflict reconstruction and recovery.

For the Acholis, the culture is even more complex given the prolonged war – a fact which social workers have to bear in mind. To effectively address the particular needs of the population recovering from the effects of the war, social workers need to be culturally sensitive. They must involve people through the bottom-up approaches if progress and full recovery is to be realised. Doing this has borne fruits in Sierra Leone (Fontana, 2006; Coulter, 2008). Such approaches not only build confidence in the intervention, but also usher in the feeling of ownership amongst the people. Mobilisation, sensitisation, advocacy and moving services closer to the people are all very important social work interventions as the findings suggest, and which social work practitioners should consider as part of their practice. In their interventions, social workers should also consider the uniqueness of individuals, households and communities and then target intervention accordingly. For the programmes that are already implemented, social workers should ensure that

they conduct regular monitoring and evaluation whose feedback should help to reform or reinvigorate a programme for greater impact to be realised.

Social workers need to be knowledgeable of cultural issues in a given community to enhance the degree of effectiveness of their programmes. The key to this is knowledge of the local language – communication is power, however basic it is. Although some of the social work interventions are geared towards changing the culture of the people, like those targeting the change of men's mindsets to make them overcome the gender biases, this has to be approached tactfully and with sensitivity to avoid repulsion as it is always the case with top-down approaches. The use of local leadership can prove helpful in this regard. Knowledge of natural events such as the signs of the start of the rainy or dry season is equally important. Ignoring the beliefs of the people may prove counter-productive. Knowledge of the formal and informal institutions of a society or community helps not only for referral purposes but also for partnership where this can be feasible.

It is important to note that most organisations that participated in the research had plans to integrate indigenous knowledge in their programmes. As already mentioned, indigenisation of programmes has worked elsewhere (Wheturangi, 2010).

Gender issues

Gender inequality is an issue in Northern Uganda because the Acholi are largely a patriarchal society. This is expressed in men controlling land, having control over decision-making, and in inequalities in access to opportunities such as education. Zuckerman, Dennis and Greenberg (2007, 8) refer to such factors as "institutionalised gender inequality". These pose serious challenges to social workers, especially in a period of post-conflict recovery. For example, the culture of preferring that boys remain in schools and promoting early marriages for girls as a source of wealth is one aspect which must be challenged. Such a trend, if allowed to continue, is likely to leave women at the periphery of social development. The male dominance over decision-making is particularly detrimental to social development as it directly affects access and control of resources.

On a positive note, it is encouraging to note that all the respondents acknowledged a relationship between gender inequality, poverty and social development. It is, therefore, incumbent upon social workers to be cognisant of this fact and consistently address gender and culture related challenges so that lasting peace and development are attained in this sub-region. All these can be properly achieved through requisite knowledge and skills acquired through appropriate training.

Concluding recommendations

It can be concluded that the issues on culture and gender in the Acholi sub-region cannot be ignored. Policy makers, employers and social work practitioners must confront them if sustainable peace, participation and prosperity are to be realised. The following recommendations are, therefore, made:

- Social workers should assist women in this sub-region to demand, through formal and informal groups or any form of representation, for their rights to be respected and for their voices to be heard. The overarching demand for self-determination should include

demands for rights to participate in decision-making, rights to own property, rights to sexual and reproductive health, education, political and economic participation, access to the use of natural resources and land, and skills training.

- Social workers should be careful to practise what they preach. Accordingly, they should be seen to be promoting cultural sensitivity and gender equality in their interventions as well as personal behaviour. Positive traditional rituals and beliefs should be seen to be complementary to modern social work approaches and therefore embraced. In order to effectively do this, social workers need to be trained in skills that make them culturally sensitive.
- All organisations involved in social development in this post-war setting should mainstream gender and cultural issues in their programmes and develop policies to support their implementation.
- Social work educational institutions should develop knowledge and learning relevant to local values and cultural practices. The development and incorporation of a model such as 'Indigenous Acholi culture' into teaching could be a good starting point for teaching on culture and gender issues in social work.
- The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development should continue to confront and front cultural and gender issues at national level through appropriate policies which promote social development.

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Armed Conflict and Political Violence in Africa's Great Lakes Region: Challenges for Social Work Education and Practice

Helmut Spitzer and Janestic M. Twikirize

Introduction

In this chapter, the role of social work is explored with regard to the urging demands and complex challenges of conflict, post-conflict and post-genocide situations in the African Great Lakes region. This region abounds with natural beauty, cultural diversity and a rich history, yet these features are harshly contrasted by the violent past and political disorder that have profoundly disrupted its geopolitical, economic, social and demographic stability (Banégas, 2008). The region poses serious challenges for the social work profession in terms of its political mandate, practice interventions and ethical responsibility (Spitzer and Twikirize, 2014). As stated by Ramon and Maglajlic (2012), there seems to be a lack of attention to the need of the social work profession to consider the manner in which political conflicts impact their work contexts, and generally social work practitioners and educators remain silent about the political issues affecting them. This observation is particularly true in a context where social work is still an emerging profession that struggles for recognition as well as resources, and where the political crisis reaches a dramatic stage where ethnic and political conflicts lead to genocide, terror against the civilian population, massive human rights abuses, forced recruitment of children into militia groups, systematic sexual violence against women and arbitrary destruction of the basic livelihoods of ordinary peasants. Structural impediments, political oppression, widespread poverty and persistent violence rooted in ethnic and political conflict dynamics notwithstanding, social work has a role to play in the overall rebuilding and development process in post-conflict societies.

For purposes of this chapter, we refer to the Great Lakes countries as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda – which is in line with other authors' (such as Lemarchand, 2009) views. With regard to Uganda, we focus on the past conflict in the north, not so much on Uganda's involvement in Eastern Congo. But it has to be mentioned that different forms of armed conflict and political violence also appear in other contexts of the greater Eastern and Central African region. In Kenya, for example, repeated ethnic clashes and political conflict, particularly after the 2007 elections, have

caused serious damage and massive killings, thus posing specific challenges for the social work profession (Wairire, 2008).

We first provide an overview of the various conflict and post-conflict scenarios in the region. Second, the devastating effects of war, armed conflict and political violence on entire societies are depicted. After briefly highlighting the current status of social work in selected countries in the region, a comprehensive conceptual framework for social work education and practice is introduced and discussed. A brief outlook on future challenges completes the paper.

Political turmoil, mass murder and the struggle for peace in the region

In the aftermath of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, when up to a million people had been massacred and millions of refugees and internally displaced people were on the move, the entire geographical region of the African Great Lakes seemed to be inflicted with political chaos, civil war and state collapse. In early 1997, shortly before the fall of the Mobutu Sese Seko regime and the violent transformation of the former Zaire into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the magazine *Africa Today* (1997) entitled its cover story the “Agony of the Great Lakes upheaval”. This agony can only be understood in the light of a thorough analysis of its historical and political root causes and of the interconnectedness of escalating ethnic conflicts on a regional level (see Mamdani 2001; Chrétien, 2008; Lemarchand, 2009; Prunier, 2009; Baregu, 2011). For social workers, it is important to have a basic understanding of these contextual factors since they essentially influence their day-to-day practice on a highly politicised grassroots level. Equally, students must have a chance to hear about such conflict dynamics in their training; these dynamics must be related to social work concepts and theories so that students are able to understand their role and potential – but also their limitations – to handle them.

Despite relative stability and peace in Rwanda, Burundi and parts of the DRC, political tensions and “ethnic” conflicts persist. Anthropological and historical evidence suggests that ethnic identities (such as “Hutu” and “Tutsi”) are far from constituting stable cultural configurations but must be rather conceived as “fluid and changing social constructions” (Banégas, 2008, 3), or as “political identities” invented by colonial administrations (Mamdani, 2001). According to Banégas (2008), ethnic identities are first and foremost “byproducts” of the State. Yet, these byproducts have been deeply internalised by the people, and they continuously serve as a perfect base for political manipulation in the struggle for power and economic gain.

Below we provide some basic information on the conflict and post-conflict scenarios in the DRC, Burundi, Rwanda and Northern Uganda.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

One of the most unstable areas in the region can be located in Eastern Congo, particularly in Orientale Province, North and South Kivu and Ituri. Domestic conflicts between a series of warring groups and repeated wars with belligerents from other African countries have led to more than four million, mainly civilian, casualties (Coghlan *et al.*, 2006). While the

western and central parts of the DRC have generally become stabilised after years of war, a new crisis in the east emerged in 2012, leading to more killings of civilians, serious human rights abuses and the breakdown of basic services. About 71% of the population live in extreme poverty, and the number of internally displaced people has risen to more than 2.6 million (UN Security Council, 2013). War crimes, including summary executions, rape and child recruitment, are widespread. Apart from national and regional factors (such as the dysfunctional state of the DRC, structural militarism, the phenomenon of warlordism and the regional problem of refugees), one has to note here that some of the key structural obstacles which continue to impede peace processes not only in Eastern Congo but in the entire Great Lakes region have a clear international dimension.

First, the exploitation of national resources such as oil, gold, diamond, coltan, and timber, executed by both international enterprises as well as by the neighbouring states of Rwanda and Uganda (Meredith, 2006), contributes to the prolongation of the conflict and the failure of the Congolese State to protect its citizens.

A second obstacle, very much linked to the first one, lies in massive geopolitical rivalries between major Western powers such as the United States, France, Belgium and Britain, as well as some African states – a rivalry that has been called the “second scramble for Africa” (Baregu, 2006). For social work, it is wise to critically reflect on such factors and to carefully examine which role it can play in order to fulfil its professional mandate. While an analysis of such macro-level aspects is a necessary prerequisite for concrete action, it is equally important to reflect on the profession's possibilities to have a tangible impact, be it on a structural level or in the face-to-face work with affected populations, or both.

Burundi

Another segment of the Great Lakes which Khadiagala (2006, 7) termed a “paradigm of problems” is Burundi. The small state experienced a violent history of mass killings, civil war, crimes against humanity (Lemarchand, 2009) and a dramatic dimension of sexual violence against women (Daley, 2008). Since 2006, the country has seen a period of relative peace and stability, yet it suffers from serious problems such as chronic violence, increasing rural poverty and hunger, and social conflicts coupled with fights over property rights in relation to the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of refugees. According to Lemarchand (2009), there were roughly 800,000 refugees in Tanzania and 300,000 internally displaced persons at the time when the Arusha Peace Accord was signed in 2000. Such big numbers of returning people pose a big challenge to the Burundian society and place enormous pressure on already overstretched social services and overcrowded land.

Rwanda

In Rwanda, the genocide is now 20 years past, yet it has left deep wounds and traumatic memories that haunt the population of the *Land of a Thousand Hills* to date. In this small, densely populated country which had roughly 7.7 million inhabitants before the genocide, between 800,000 and one million people – mainly Tutsi and tens of thousands of oppositional Hutu – were systematically killed by government soldiers and policemen, brutal militia groups and high numbers of civilian perpetrators. In fact, as has been put

by Mamdani (2001), no one can say with certainty how many people were killed in the hundred days of slaughter. While the international community failed to intervene, the massacres were finally stopped by the Rwandan Patriotic Front in July 1994. After the genocide, the entire infrastructure was destroyed, and the civil service, judicial system, health care and education services were ruined. About two million people had fled the country, over one million were internally displaced, tens of thousands of genocide survivors were deeply traumatised and over 500,000 of the so-called “old caseload” refugees, mainly of Tutsi origin, returned from exile (Reyntjens, 2004, 178). In the subsequent two decades, the new government undertook tremendous efforts to rebuild the country and to achieve economic progress, coupled with an ambitious, internationally recognised, albeit criticised project of an indigenous, community-based judicial approach towards transitional justice and post-genocide reconciliation called *gacaca* (Jones, 2010). Social workers played an important role in *gacaca* courts (Kabeera and Sewpaul, 2008). Contrary to the situation in Burundi where the issue of Hutu and Tutsi identities is openly discussed, a public ban on all references to ethnicity has been launched in Rwanda, and the use of the words “Hutu”, “Tutsi” and “Twa” (a sometimes neglected third “ethnic” group in Rwanda) is now illegal in public political discourse (Lemarchand, 2008). Yet, this ethnic hatred is a major cause of Rwanda’s past and current problems.

Uganda

Northern Uganda experienced 20 years of armed conflict until 2006 when the situation became more stabilised and peaceful. While the conflict was primarily seen as a fight between a rebel group called the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and the Ugandan military forces, the principal victims were the local people caught in between (Dolan, 2009). For a long time, this conflict has been totally neglected by the international community, yet, it can be described as one of the longest running, most complex and brutal conflicts on the African continent in recent history (Spitzer and Twikirize, 2013). At the peak of the conflict, over 800,000 people, or more than 80% of the total population of the affected districts, were internally displaced and concentrated in the so-called protected villages (Dolan, 2009). In the course of the 20 years of insurgency, more than 25,000 children and youth were abducted by the LRA and used as “child soldiers” (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2008), thus causing one of the biggest challenges for social work and the communities at large with regard to their social reintegration.

If only the baobabs could speak:¹ The suffering of the civilian population

In contexts as described above, social work has to deal with the destructive, long-lasting impact of structural and direct violence on civilians. Ordinary women, children and men who mainly dwell in rural areas and earn a living from subsistence farming have become primary targets of systematic violence. The individual and collective suffering and distress of the people remain largely unnoticed and undocumented, with sometimes the natural habitat as the only silent witness. In the following section, the multiple and long-lasting effects of conflict will be discussed in relation to the challenges for social work.

¹ The symbolic phrase “If only the baobabs could speak” was adopted from Alagiah (2001, 269).

Destruction of infrastructure, loss of livelihood and breakdown of basic services

Armed conflict, political violence and genocide lead not only to loss of lives, but also the destruction of the physical, social and economic infrastructure. In Rwanda, besides the loss of one million lives during the genocide, the long-term impacts on the society have been observed in the diminished capacity of households and communities to meet their own needs owing to severe poverty. The genocide resulted in a tremendous increase of vulnerable groups, including: orphans, widows, the elderly, the disabled, displaced people, street children and prisoners (Kalinganire and Rutikanga, 2013). Populations in post-conflict settings struggle with limited access to basic social services, including health and education. Efforts to reconstruct schools are generally slow. As a consequence, limited access to educational opportunities has long-term negative impacts on personal, community and social development. This applies to Burundi where the education sector was totally destroyed during the armed conflict. Schools were demolished and looted, and both schoolchildren and teachers were killed (Obura, 2008). It is thus vital for social work to engage in the education system and contribute to the return of high quality education. Social workers can also play a role in the management of reconstruction efforts in the health sector and the restoration of other basic services.

Vicious circle between conflict and poverty

When discussing the Great Lakes' context, one must bear in mind that the majority of the people in the region are not only affected by conflict and violence but live under circumstances of extreme and chronic poverty. Mortality studies suggest that in armed conflict many more people are killed through indirect rather than direct means, mainly through sickness and hunger (Blattman, 2012). Gasana (2008, 168), referring to the challenges of trauma healing in post-genocide Rwanda, provides an analysis that is relevant for the entire region: "Conflict is largely linked with social and economic inequalities that recycle violence and poverty." Likewise, Lemarchand (2006) underscores the circular relationship between conflict and poverty: Conflict causes poverty, and poverty in turn generates conflict, hence, this vicious circle represents a key impediment to prosperous development in these countries. As a consequence, peace-building and development efforts in post-conflict situations should be seen as intersecting areas (Gasana, 2008; Mutisi, 2010). Such an understanding is important for social work stakeholders, thus, it should constitute basic knowledge in education and practice. It also strongly relates to the reason for social workers to focus on social development (see the conceptual framework below).

Disruption of people's culture

The impact of conflict is also seen in the disruption of people's culture and value systems. The loss of a people's culture and traditions has long-term implications for their general well-being since it also affects their sense of identity (Maathai, 2009). In Northern Uganda, local knowledge systems and social support mechanisms of the Acholi society (the dominant population group in the region) were put under severe stress and partly

destroyed when people were uprooted from their communities and forced to live in camps for many years. In Burundi, community-based institutions, the so-called *ubushingantahe* which represent a system of local conflict resolution and decision-making, have been severely disrupted (Naniwe-Kaburahe, 2008). It is, thus, pertinent for social workers practising in post-conflict areas to be conscious of such sometimes subtle impacts on people's culture and sense of identity and, where necessary, support efforts to identify and revive cultural practices as a major resource in peace-building and rebuilding communities.

Psycho-social impact of conflict and violence

Civilian populations in conflict-ridden areas also suffer from long-lasting psycho-social effects attributed to traumatic experiences, witnessing of and participation in violent acts, the loss of livelihoods, and personal humiliation and abuse which penetrate the human dignity and physical integrity of the victims. Additionally, too many people in contexts like Rwanda, Burundi and Eastern Congo are confronted with grief and despair due to distorted mourning processes. Hundreds of thousands of people in the region were killed in the bush or their bodies disposed of in makeshift mass graves with no information about their whereabouts. The inability to mourn or bury their murdered and disappeared family members imposes a serious, even traumatic challenge to individuals, families and communities, which social workers have to deal with in their day-to-day work. Supporting survivors of violence to regain their sense of self-worth, access the needed services, including legal justice, and get smoothly reintegrated in their families and communities are apparently some of the challenging tasks for social workers. It is in such complex situations where, for example, besides the trauma of sexual violence, survivors face rejection from the communities, that some traditional structures could offer useful resources.

Loss of trust

Other effects of long-standing conflicts and violence have been in the development of popular animosity and mistrust in the government and other political structures. In general, the affected populations feel neglected and unprotected, betrayed by the very structures that have the mandate to protect them. In fact, as Daley (2008) alluded to, violence in the African Great Lakes region is very much associated with State power, evident in the failure of governments to distinguish between combatants and civilians, the militarisation of children, the targeting of civilians through massacres and forced displacement and the sanctioning of widespread sexual violence. In Rwanda where the genocide had been planned and organised by high-calibre government and military officials and executed under the supervision of local leaders, a radical breakdown of trust, particularly towards community leaders, emerged (Steward, 2008). Social workers have to deal with these forms of suspicion and mistrust – coupled with the loss of confidence due to traumatising experiences – and try to rebuild the basic trust of the people in the formal State and non-State apparatus so that they can once again feel safe to freely participate in the affairs that affect their society. But this can only work if new government structures are trustworthy, hence, social work is well advised to act as a watchdog and carefully monitor political decision-making processes.

Gender-based violence and wartime rape

Whilst war and conflict have devastating impacts on whole populations, children and women tend to be disproportionately affected. Common sexual violence committed against women and children includes abductions, trafficking, gang rape and sexual slavery. Many authors (Onkalit, 2005; Cochran, 2008; Liebling-Kalifani *et al.*, 2008) view sexual violence as a premeditated tool of war. Olounphe (2005) argues that rape and other forms of sexual abuse are propelled by the breakdown of law and order that accompanies violent conflicts. Militarised rape must be seen as a planned and systematic assault, not only on the individual woman, but the entire community (Cochran, 2008).

A weapon of traumatic power, wartime rape devastates the family in which the mother is raped in front of a husband who cannot protect her and the children who depend on her for survival. Once a family unit is shattered, fibers of the communal social fabric unravel, as many communities view women as the embodiment and repository of cultural and spiritual values. (Cochran, 2008, 3)

In many cases women were not only raped but also sexually mutilated. In the Rwandan genocide, extreme forms of violence have been reported, such as cutting of breasts, mutilation of vaginas and the opening of the womb to cut out an unborn child before killing the mother (Nowrojee, 1996). Abduction of children and women as well as public gang rape to destabilise entire communities and to destroy the social cohesion of the people have been reported in virtually all conflict zones in the Great Lakes region. Sometimes, women find themselves in a situation where there is no clear boundary between perpetrators and protectors. In Northern Uganda, rape and sexual violence were perpetrated by both the LRA rebels and the government forces that were supposed to protect the people (Amnesty International, 2007). Some of the consequences of sexual violence are seen in the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, disproportionately high HIV prevalence rates and the social stigmatisation of affected women. While rape had been declared a war crime and a crime against humanity by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (Cochran, 2008), it remains a social taboo on the level of concerned families and communities. In many cases girls and women are rejected by their communities. Those who give birth to children out of rape suffer from psychological problems as well as social stigma and isolation. Another concern refers to the lack of security of women in camps for refugees and internally displaced people. Yacob-Haliso (2009) points at various forms of violence and abuse women have to endure in such situations. Consequently, women and girls “as tools of war” (Onkalit, 2005) deserve special attention and support when it comes to social work in conflict and post-conflict zones affected by such high levels of sexual violence.

Social work in the region: David versus Goliath?

Given the scope of social problems in the region, buttressed by poverty, perpetual conflicts, violence and disease, the need for a strong social work profession cannot be overstated. Whereas the profession is faced with a myriad of challenges, it is still quite young. Apart from Uganda where the first degree programme started in 1969 at Makerere University, social work can be described as an emerging profession, still struggling with its own profile. In Rwanda, formal social work training was introduced in 1998 in order to address the

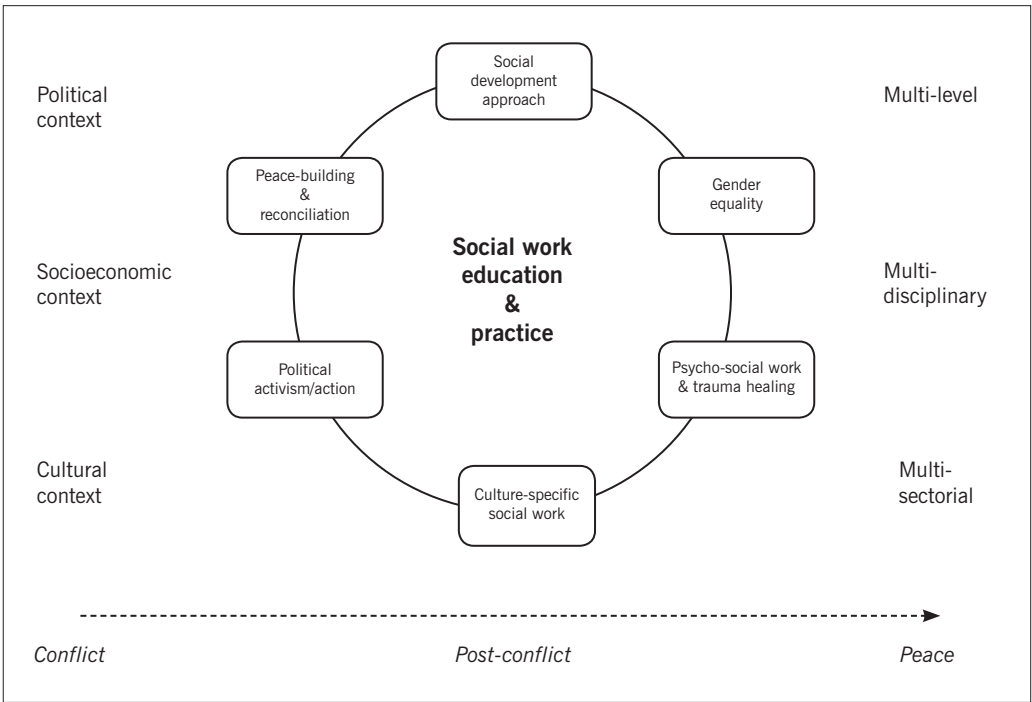
psycho-social well-being of children affected by trauma and other effects of the genocide. In Burundi, the training for *travail social* began only in 2004.² Training opportunities are still inadequate, and the training institutions are under-resourced in terms of personnel, qualifications, academic capacities and infrastructure. In all the countries of the region, the practice of social work remains unregulated and largely underestimated as a profession, despite the obvious role it plays or has to play in the context of the magnitude of the prevailing interlinked and complex political, social and economic problems.

In the next section, we provide a conceptual framework for the specific role of social work in contexts as described above. In our view, the profession requires a comprehensive and multi-dimensional fundament to qualify as a vital stakeholder in peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction.

A conceptual framework for social work education and practice

The proposed conceptual framework has six key elements which should be incorporated into social work training and implemented in social work practice, namely: culture-specific social work; a social development approach in social work; peace-building and reconciliation; psycho-social work and trauma healing; gender equality and women’s empowerment; and political activism/action (see Figure 24.1). Each element will be explicated below and supplemented by a case example.

Figure 24.1: Conceptual framework for social work education and practice in the continuum between conflict and peace



² With regard to Eastern Congo there was no data available at the time of writing this article.

All elements are interlinked and should be related to the respective political, socioeconomic and cultural context. In this regard, they should also refer to the power of African ethics which can play a significant role in transformation processes from war-time to peace (Spitzer and Twikirize, 2014). Ideally, social work interventions should be multi-level, multidisciplinary and multi-sectorial in their design. They should be conceptualised in such a way that they are implemented at different levels, from the micro level up to the macro level. They can only be successful if they are aligned with other professions and stakeholders; and they should be targeted at different sectors of the society, including social services, education, health, water and sanitation, infrastructure, institutions and civil society. In post-conflict situations and particularly in times of war and political unrest, some interventions might show characteristics of short-term relief and humanitarian assistance. But in general, social work should rather contribute to sustainable development, long-term social and economic reconstruction and political reconciliation. The proposed conceptual framework can also serve as a means in the prevention of further conflict. The lower line in Figure 1 indicates that there is a fragile continuum between a conflict situation and peace. A post-conflict situation is often characterised by complex and unstable conditions and high levels of uncertainty. Sometimes violence continues even when a conflict has ostensibly ended. In other cases, conflict recurs after a short period of peace (UNDP, 2008).

Complex situations require complex responses, hence, social work students – and, of course, those who teach them – have to deal with these complexities at training level in order to competently handle them when entering the practice field. As pointed out by Kinyanjui (2006), for social work to play a role in conflict prevention, resolution and management in African post-conflict situations, it must be strengthened and enhanced in its capacities. Hence, the proposed framework for social work in these contexts can only be realistic if it is accompanied by broader efforts to promote the social work profession in the region.

Culture-specific social work

The call for culturally appropriate or context-specific social work in African countries has a long history and is still omnipresent in contemporary discourse (such as Rankopo and Osei-Hwedie, 2011; Kreitzer, 2012). At the heart of this discourse lies the claim that social work must capture the social and cultural realities within which it operates and should not rely on the application of foreign social work concepts which were designed for completely different contexts and problems. This claim gets even more relevant when it comes to situations as described in this chapter. In times of war and armed conflict, cultural values and practices become fragmented, disrupted or even completely destroyed. Gender relations change drastically and the social fabric of communities and the society at large is sometimes distorted so that the people lose orientation. At the same time, particularly in transitional periods of post-conflict contexts, coupled with the influx of international humanitarian workers and development 'experts', modernisation further erodes local knowledge systems and corresponding forms of coping and conflict resolution mechanisms. It has been observed that some post-conflict African societies have now turned their attention

to their legacy of indigenous practices of dispute settlement and reconciliation. The main argument is that traditional and informal justice systems may be adopted or adapted to develop appropriate responses to a history of civil war and oppression (Huyse, 2008). It is vital for social workers to be sensitive towards these changes and processes and to try to identify positive cultural resources and practices which might be utilised or re-enforced for peace-building, trauma healing and the sometimes difficult and painful search for truth and reconciliation in their day-to-day work (see also Steward, 2008).

Example:

In post-genocide Rwanda, many people are still emotionally distressed and experience social tensions along ethnic divides. Nyiransekuye (2011) stresses the importance of incorporating cultural rituals into social work practice in order to deal with such a situation. Despite the fact that many traditional healing skills have been forgotten or are no longer valued and used in society, there is a strong desire for communal approaches and sharing rituals, particularly in times of calamity. Such approaches can be found in the importance of *urubohero* (the weaving place) and *ngoma* (drumming). The traditional weaving place allows women to talk about their pain, mourn their losses and offer each other support and tips for coping. It is a sanctioned space for such gatherings, and it allows women to speak freely and deeply without censor, which might not be the case in more formal counselling settings. The *ngoma* (drum) is seen as an important communication tool. Different beats have different meanings, and some have the potential to heal. Dances, songs and drumming are seen as an essential element of mutual community support and strengthen a sense of togetherness. Both approaches have a strong meaning for the local population and can be seen as innovative yet traditional ways of addressing the immense trauma experienced by so many Rwandans during and after the genocide, hence the need to integrate them into and strengthen them by social work.

A social development approach in social work

Social development is an interdisciplinary field aiming at the improvement of the standard of living of people, particularly those affected by poverty and deprivation. According to Midgley (2014, 13), social development can be defined as a “*process of planned social change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole within the context of a dynamic multifaceted development process*”. It is this transformative element of social development, together with a strong emphasis on social investment, that makes this approach professionally rewarding for social work, thus accentuating the profession as a social change agent (Midgley, 2010). In post-conflict situations, it is important for social work to seek avenues on how to support entire communities and regions in their fight for survival due to the fact that their livelihoods, infrastructure and basic services have been severely weakened or totally destroyed. It is a matter of fact that people affected by war, conflict and displacement are in dire need of material support. In Burundi and Rwanda, there is a saying that “an empty stomach cannot listen”, thus providing a clear-cut guideline for social work interventions in times of extreme poverty, hunger and desolation. People in such situations need food, water, shelter, drugs, jobs, crops, assets and income. But whilst

concentrating on particularly vulnerable groups who need specific support, it is equally important to deliberate social development strategies and interventions which target the broader society which might be collectively affected by the disastrous impact of conflict, violence and poverty. Social work students should gain a thorough understanding of the social development approach and assess its potential for their own societal context. Social work practitioners are challenged to transfer the conceptual underpinnings of this approach into concrete and tangible action.

Example:

During the conflict in Northern Uganda, the local non-government organisation GUSCO (Gulu Support the Children Organisation) was dealing with war-affected children, focusing its interventions on the social reintegration of children and youth who were actively involved in the military ranks of the Lord's Resistance Army. Although social workers were aware of the potential mental damage of traumatic experiences of former "child soldiers", the focus of their interventions was not so much on counselling but rather on medical care, education, vocational training, awareness building, political advocacy, culture-specific forms of reconciliation and healing, community development and material support for families (Spitzer, 2008). Without calling their approach 'social development', the project featured key elements of a developmental perspective in social work under conditions of an ongoing armed conflict.

Peace-building and reconciliation

Peace-building, mediation and reconciliation efforts are central to social work in societies affected by ethnic and political conflict. Social work interventions revolve around the re-building of social cohesion and social harmony; conflict resolution and the search for truth and justice; the social reintegration of ex-combatants and refugees; and issues of punishment, retaliation, reconciliation, forgiveness, sorrow and redress – both at community level as well as at a broader political and societal level. Sometimes it is an almost impossible task to reconcile victims, survivors and perpetrators in the face of extreme forms of direct and mass violence, committed even between neighbours and community members, as was the case in Rwanda and Burundi. Corresponding social work interventions require sensitive listening and counselling skills and a constant awareness of inequalities and social mechanisms of discrimination and exclusion with regard to ethnic differences, gender and the status of particularly vulnerable groups. Peace-building is not an easy task, and it can only be seen as a process along the sometimes fragile continuum between war and peace, exacerbated by poverty and ethnic tensions.

Being-at-peace is possible but improbable in an environment that is impoverished. Being peaceful is an enormous challenge when others with whom one interacts are hostile, aggressive, very competitive, and violent. And living in peace is almost inconceivable in desperately poor and war-ridden cultures. (Webel, 2007, 11)

Galtung (2007, 18), a leading figure in international peace studies, wrote: "If violence is the smoke, then conflict is the fire." Taking this metaphor to the sphere of social work in peace-building and conflict resolution, one might say that the profession has to deal with

both the smoke and the fire, or in other words: with the symptoms and causes of violence. In a post-conflict situation, by virtue of its definition, the fire might no longer burn, yet the smoke is still there, caused by a latent dimension of glow which social workers have to deal with at grassroots as well as a political level. Webel (2007, 11) refers to such situations by describing them as “weak, or fragile peace”; Galtung (2007) would call it “negative peace”. There is no evidence of conflict and other widespread violence in a particular culture, society or nation-state, but there is still pervasive injustice, inequity and personal discord and dissatisfaction among the people. As a consequence, ways of conflict prevention and management, mediation and justice mechanisms must be incorporated into social work curricula, with a strong emphasis on African ways of conflict resolution.

Example:

A situation where almost all aforementioned aspects of peace-building and reconciliation can be found is Burundi. Both ethnic conflicts between Hutu and Tutsi and conflicts over land issues and scarce resources between settlers and returning refugees and displaced persons are on the agenda. Social workers engaged in an organisation called *Centre Ubuntu* closely collaborate with local communities and traditional elders in order to restore and maintain peace and reconciliation between historically and politically divided groups. Their approach is strongly build on the African ethical concept of *ubuntu*, referring to the interconnectedness of all human beings and to basic principles of mutual trust, reciprocity, solidarity, generosity and respect for each other (Ntakarutimana, 2008). In the approach of this NGO, locally relevant ways of conflict management, problem-solving and coping are systematically identified, analysed and adopted in community-based social work practice (Spitzer and Twikirize, 2014).

Psycho-social work and trauma healing

Karbo and Mutisi (2008) challenge the preoccupation of post-conflict reconstruction with the hardware components such as infrastructure development, rebuilding weakened institutions and facilitating socioeconomic aspects of development at the expense of psychological aspects. They contend that the psychological aspect of healing is imperative because those who have experienced the horrors of violent conflict are often scarred emotionally and left traumatised. They further argue that healing at the psychological level allows for the rebuilding and mending of broken relationships, necessary for the human society to remain intact. The psycho-social approach addresses the well-being of individuals in relation to their environment, the latter comprising their social relations, the material world, and the social, cultural and political context in which people live. It is an approach that links the “inner world” with the “outer world” of people, thus assuming that both influence each other (Becker and Weyermann, 2006). In social work terminology, this relates to the “person-in-environment”-perspective (Payne, 2005). For African contexts, it might be even more appropriate to term such an approach *person-in-community*, since the community is the bedrock of African societies. As Kinyanjui (2006, 157) put it: “In Africa, society is, in fact, a community.” In many African philosophical and ethical concepts, the community and the family are central. *Ubuntu*, in many African languages,

refers to “humanness”. The Tanzanian concept of *ujamaa*, which is sometimes wrongly and simplistically translated as “African socialism”, literally means “brotherhood”, or more accurately “familyhood”. When it comes to psycho-social work in situations of political violence and conflict where people have to cope with loss, grief, despair, fear, trauma and disturbed mourning processes, such notions become paramount. In this regard, particular attention should be paid to the tendency of the so-called trauma projects in post-conflict contexts which are often based on Western medical and psychological concepts of trauma and distress, as well as on an individualistic understanding of human existence and human suffering. Here the words of Summerfield (1998, 31) can be helpful: “Suffering arises from, and is resolved in, a social context which contains mediating factors for good or ill.” Social work is the ideal profession to deal with this social context and the individuals and communities therein. The individual and collective traumatic experiences of the people pose a key task for social work interventions in the region; hence, issues of trauma, coping and resilience should be essential elements in social work training.

Example:

In the situation of the conflict in Northern Uganda where tens of thousands of children, youth and young adults were forcefully recruited by the LRA, relief agencies had to find ways how to deal with individual and collective traumatic experiences on a large scale. In a study conducted at a time when the conflict was still at its peak, two organisations working with war-affected children were analysed with regard to their psycho-social approaches and concepts: a local NGO (GUSCO) and a faith-based organisation (World Vision) (Spitzer, 2008). Social workers in both agencies applied methods of group counselling as a way of sharing bitter and traumatic experiences. But their approach differed with regard to religion and traditional spirituality. GUSCO was mainly working with community leaders and incorporated local healing mechanisms such as cleansing and welcoming rituals and reconciliation ceremonies. This approach entailed collaboration with traditional healers who serve as mediator between the living world and the spirits and ancestors. This was particularly important if somebody was haunted by the evil spirits of a killed person. On the other hand, World Vision incorporated elements of Christian prayer, reading of the Bible and belief in God. Here social workers based their community approach on collaboration with churches. Both approaches had a strong meaning for the local people, hence, the Christian perspective on healing, reconciliation and social reintegration was seen as complementing the traditional, more culture-specific approach.

Gender equality and women's empowerment

When analysing societies which are deeply affected by violent conflict, it becomes apparent that gender is both a category of difference and inequality. Women's structurally and culturally determined lower social status in society is exacerbated by widespread and systematic sexual violence against women and girls in times of armed conflict and political turmoil. As shown earlier, this violence has a deep impact not only on the individual well-being of a woman or girl, but also on her role in the community and society. Kabonesa (2005) argues for a gender mainstreaming approach in situations of peace-building,

meaning that gender perspectives and the goal of gender equality should be central to all activities, from the policy level to concrete programming and implementation of project activities. For social work to play a meaningful role in this regard, issues of gender equality, gender mainstreaming and empowerment of women and girls should first and foremost be central in the curriculum. It is not sufficient to have a single course on gender issues; rather, this topic should be handled as a cross-cutting issue throughout the training programme. Social workers have to be skilled with essential knowledge about the origins and social constructions of gender roles and gender relations. They should also have the capacity to apply gender as a key and cross-cutting category in analysing social, political, institutional, organisational and cultural contexts. Social work interventions without a gender lens are futile since they ignore a key aspect of social life. Social work students, educators and practitioners who are themselves part of a society that produces gender inequality have to critically reflect on their personal images and experiences of gender roles and gender relations in order to overcome deeply-rooted stereotypes of what it means to be a woman or a man. Hence, self-awareness and application of a gender perspective in social work go hand-in-hand.

Example:

After the genocide in Rwanda, many widowed women found themselves as heads of households in a situation of total destruction and a general state of chaos and trauma. In 1995, a group of women formed AVEGA Agahozo (*Association de Veuves du Génocide d'Avril*), an NGO with a focus on the support of widows. In the course of the years, the organisation was growing tremendously and managed to operate different projects in the whole country. Project activities include psychological and medical care; justice and advocacy; economic and social support operations; and institutional capacity-building. According to a representative of AVEGA, they managed to get more than 20,000 supporters from all sectors of the society, including civil society organisations, self-help groups, government officials, community development workers, social workers and international organisations.³ Today, AVEGA represents a key pillar not only in the fight for the rights of genocide survivors and widows, but for the empowerment of women in general.

Political activism/action

Social work, when confronted with the double jeopardy of conflict and poverty, is mainly engaged at the micro level in addressing the symptoms and merely reaches a macro level where the root causes should be found. Baregu (2011) states that any potentially successful attempt to resolve conflicts in the Great Lakes region does not depend on the “political will” to address root causes, but primarily on the interests and logic of different actors. He points at the multiplicity of actors and complexity of interests and suggests four sets of actor orientations that define and structure the success or failure of peace processes: peacemakers; peace blockers (which he calls “spoilers”); peace opportunists; and conflict entrepreneurs. In this set of actors, sub-groups such as military forces, security companies, drug dealers, warlords, arms merchants, money launderers, diamond and gold

³ Interview with an AVEGA representative in Kigali, March 2009. See also <http://avegaagahozo.org/>.

diggers, international financial institutions and politicians – all work together in complex interdependencies. If social workers in Africa should become active in the political processes and debates in their respective countries, as claimed by Mmatli (2008), then they must be aware of the political and economic complexities in these situations and critically reflect both on their own roles and capabilities as well as on their entanglement in these processes and dependence on certain actors. Social work in a context such as Rwanda, just to give one example, has to act under circumstances of political authoritarianism and oppression (Straus and Waldorf, 2011). Hence, social work stakeholders face certain risks when they openly criticise the government. Political activism and political action – the latter refers to Freire's (1996) notion that action without reflection leads to pure activism which lacks the opportunity for dialogue and, hence, for transformation – must be inspired by social work's basic principles as enshrined in the international definition of social work (IFSW, 2000) and its revised draft (IFSW and IASSW, 2014). These definitions include a focus on empowerment and liberation of people, human rights, social justice, social cohesion, collective responsibility and respect for diversities. Cox and Pawar (2013) stress the particular importance of maintaining social work principles in post-conflict circumstances and point at an approach that is people-centred, participatory, based on human rights and fundamental freedoms, empowering and sustainable. In their efforts, social workers strive for democratic structures and good governance and challenge economics and politics which exclusively follow the diktat of neoliberal-capitalist ideologies and which do not care about the plight of impoverished and excluded people. Political social work can, thus, never be without conflicts and will most likely face opposition and resistance from more powerful stakeholders. As a consequence, social workers should network with other civil society actors in order to empower themselves whilst contributing to the empowerment of their clientele.

Example:

The PROSOWO-project (Promotion of Professional Social Work in East Africa; see the introductory chapter in this volume) had an inherent component towards a strong political mandate for the profession. Although it did not have a direct link to social work in conflict and post-conflict situations, it nevertheless contributed to the empowerment of the profession in countries which – to different extents – show post-conflict characteristics and/or which are troubled by ethnic and/or political tensions. This applies to Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda. The key activities in this regard were: continuous networking at national, regional and international level; launching of and participating in symposia, workshops, seminars and conferences; public relations and working towards high media coverage; lobbying and advocacy in order to bring policy makers on board; dissemination of relevant information to key stakeholders; and increased academic publishing. The most powerful political signal of the PROSOWO project was a march for social justice on the streets of Kampala as part of an international social work conference in March 2014.

Concluding remarks

The African Great Lakes region poses serious challenges for the social work profession. The circumstances under which social work education and practice take place are extremely difficult and complex. The interrelated problems of conflict, violence and poverty require specific responses and interventions. The conceptual framework in this article serves as a first step to rethink current curricula and practice. A desideratum for the future lies in more empirically-based research on the role of social work in post-conflict reconstruction, peace-building, reconciliation and collective healing processes after periods of massive man-made disasters. In order to provide a meaningful contribution to a lasting peace and a prosperous social development for the people in the African Great Lakes region, social work deserves full attention and support from both government as well as from the international community, including Western partners and the international social work fraternity.

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A Vision for Social Work in East Africa

Helmut Spitzer and Janestic M. Twikirize

The 25 articles in this book provide a unique picture of social work in the East African region. The theoretical reflections, empirical evidence and political positions therein testify to a vivid scientific discourse and portray a strong profession. However, social work in East Africa has not fully exploited its potential in contributing to national and regional development and the fight against pervasive poverty yet. The power of the social work profession has become visible throughout the book, despite the fact that there are major impediments yet to be overcome. All contributions share a common feature: Social problems and broader developments in society are critically viewed, analysed and reflected upon through the lens of social work, which, in the context of the prevalent poverty situation and other challenges in the region, requires a particular nuance – a developmental perspective. In this concluding chapter, we underscore the relevance of a social development approach in social work and complement it with further essentials for social work to be effective in contexts of the East African Community.

Social work as social development

“Developmental social work” or the “social development approach to social work” (Midgley and Conley, 2010a, xiii) emphasises clients’ strengths and the importance of empowerment, while at the same time focuses on tangible social investments that enhance their capabilities and facilitate their participation in community life and the productive economy (Midgley and Conley, 2010a). It also stresses the promotion of social integration and the importance of fostering solidarity at the community and societal levels, incorporating a strong social change function by which it promotes improvements in people’s well-being and in wider social conditions (Midgley, 2010).

Based on the empirical findings of the PROSOWO project (see the introductory chapter in this book), it can be stated that social development is strongly supported as the most appropriate approach to social work in the four East African countries of Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, with some country-level differences. There is some extent of adoption of a developmental approach in practice with social workers engaged in various activities that support a developmental perspective. The most common activities of a developmental nature of social work include: facilitating the formation and functioning of micro-saving and micro-credit schemes within communities, assisting poor

households to start income-generating activities, supporting youths in vocational skills training programmes, and supporting vulnerable children to enrol in school. However, macro-level interventions such as policy practice, advocacy, research, programme and project evaluation are currently under-represented in social workers' roles in all the four countries (see Part III of this publication). Because social development is an emerging approach, it presents "pressing implementation challenges" (Loffell, 2008, cited in Midgley and Conley, 2010b, 194). Midgley and Conley (2010b, 197) rightly note that "in many developing countries, social workers are involved in developmental activities for which they have received little if any training". A social development approach requires that the above developmental roles be given priority in education and practice (Midgley and Conley, 2010b; Mupedziswa, 2001). This developmental perspective in social work training and education is critical in order to adequately prepare practitioners for effective interventions.

The social work curricula, particularly in Kenya and Uganda, were described as developmental and incorporating key topics on poverty reduction, social policy and gender equality. However, a number of practitioners admitted that they had not been adequately prepared through training to tackle issues of poverty and yet, it is the most pressing problem that they have to deal with, besides other critical issues such as gender-based violence and general inequality. Hence, more emphasis needs to be laid on preparing social workers for developmental-oriented practice. This has to be reflected not only in content but also in the methods of teaching and training. Mupedziswa (2001) provides important insights into aligning and/or evaluating social work curricula in terms of whether they meet the demands of developmental practice. He identifies both curriculum- and non-curriculum-related aspects. Curriculum-related aspects include ongoing curriculum review to align training to emerging needs of a country, relevant field placements, use of relevant concepts, progressive lecture delivery methods that emphasise classroom interaction and ensuring the relevance of student projects and assignments. Extra-curricular activities include generation and use of indigenous materials, generation and use of local research, networking with other institutions, localisation of staff complement, relevant graduate employment patterns and meaningful contributions by staff towards local social policy (see Mupedziswa, 2001 for a detailed exposition on these criteria). Various articles in this publication have revealed gaps in relation to the above aspects with the exception of localisation of staff. But even in terms of staffing, there were issues of non-social work trained staff employed to train social work students. The most critical areas that need to be deliberately strengthened include: engagement in local research; generation and use of indigenous materials; and meaningful contributions to local social policy. Students' field placements must also be well managed to ensure that students are adequately exposed to and acquire practice knowledge and skills in developmental social work practice and that they are appropriately supervised by trained social workers.

At a landmark conference on social work and social development in Kampala in March 2014, social work students also pointed to gaps in development of critical thinking, advocacy and political activism. They specified that the curriculum in the respective

training institutions must be designed in a manner that produces social workers who can reason more critically and be able to stand up against discriminatory frameworks and one that empowers them to advocate for vulnerable groups (Lombard and Wairire, 2014). All the above aspects are crucial for entrenching a social development approach in social work practice.

The adoption of a developmental perspective in social work education and practice does not necessarily mean that other concepts and approaches should be completely abandoned. In our view, the social development approach rather complements and even embraces existing theories, concepts and methods – as long as these concepts are compliant with the given social realities and cultural contexts. Future research can further identify linkages between the social development perspective and other social work approaches, with a particular focus on context-specific knowledge systems and epistemologies which are not fully included yet in social work thinking and practice.

Social work as political stakeholder

East Africa is currently faced with enormous social problems and challenges, including, not only pervasive poverty and deprivation, but also a widening gap between the rich and the poor; political and ethnic conflict resulting in internally displaced persons and refugees; gender inequality; child trafficking and other forms of child abuse; HIV/AIDS and other diseases; and violation of minority rights. Whilst these challenges might seem insurmountable, as contended by Mwansa (2012, 368) they “must be seen as unlimited opportunities for the practitioner to reach out for innovations and new technologies, techniques and knowledge. They also provide opportunities for transformation, empowerment, and the creation of a new era of service.” In view of these challenges, social work practice in East Africa must transcend its micro-focus and instead strongly embrace strategies that challenge oppressive structures, institutions and policies at all levels, including the macro level. Mmatli (2008) argues that most of the problems faced by social work clients are structural and result from political processes and as such, social workers need to adopt political activism as an intervention strategy “aimed at creating a conducive environment in which other social work methods can be practiced” (*ibid.*, 297).

According to Ginsberg (2010), the formal involvement of social work in government and politics and its commitment to work towards political improvement points at one of the distinctive qualities of the profession. “We take stands on policy issues that affect those we serve.” (*ibid.*, 92) Midgley and Conley (2010b) similarly urge social workers to engage in political action which is needed to challenge discrimination, racism, sexism and other impediments to progress. In a similar manner, Sewpaul (2006) strongly argues that social workers need to engage in policy-making processes and by so doing, advocate changes in structural sources of oppression, exclusion and poverty.

As social workers, irrespective of what our orientations might be – whether we work at the micro or the macro levels or the intersections of both – policy has the potential to profoundly influence what we do and how we do it. (Sewpaul 2006, 134)

It has to be noted here that in some East African countries, social work operates under the circumstances of political oppression, authoritarian structures, undemocratic decision-making processes, politically motivated violence from the State apparatus, and widespread

corruption. Hence, to take a political stand for those who are oppressed, marginalised and scapegoated, and in opposition to those who are in power, requires courage, political will, a visionary approach towards a society where basic human rights are fulfilled, and strong networks and associations rooted in civil society.

Social work as a catalyst for civil society movements

Civil society is slowly gaining ground and becoming active in many countries in East Africa. The late Wangari Maathai (2009, 11), a Nobel Peace Prize laureate from Kenya and founder of the Green Belt Movement, states: "African civil society – non-governmental organizations, trade unions, civic associations, community-based groups, and ordinary citizens – is becoming bolder in speaking out in support of human rights and good governance." The same observation is made by Mukandala, Fox and Liebenthal (2006) who argue that despite the instability in some African countries, the trend has been towards a more plural order, with an independent civil society playing a more central role. The social work profession has an opportunity and a mandate to take a lead in this process. Social workers, through their national associations, and social work scholars and educators, through their existing academic and institutional networks, have to actively engage, along with the rest of civil society such as NGOs and grassroots organisations, in political activism and advocacy for the vulnerable groups in society. In the past years, some national associations in East Africa managed to revive their structures and strengthen their capacities, thus, placing them in a better situation to influence policies and speak out with regard to pressing social and political issues. The new generation of social work students are equally getting involved in political debates and have started to network with each other across national borders, utilising the possibilities of new media such as the Internet to become part of a global dialogue. Such endeavours have to be facilitated at training level by motivated and courageous lecturers who themselves should not shy away from political action and raising their voice against oppressive and stigmatising tendencies in society.

Midgley and Conley (2010b, 197) argue that through such coalitions and networks, social workers can exercise political influence to address resource problems related to the expansion of developmental social services. As an essential step in this process, the PROSOWO project contributed towards the visibility of social work and enabled an initial dialogue with government officials and other decision-making bodies. Both policy makers and development stakeholders got to know the potential of social work to play a role in the formulation and implementation of social policies and poverty reduction programmes.

The principle of participation is central to social work practice and policy, and so it is with regard to the question of civil society's involvement in decision-making and development processes. Citizens, communities and grassroots movements should be encouraged and empowered by social workers to become actively involved in development efforts and the promotion of democracy. Othman (2003) refers to the need to critically reflect on development models coming from other parts of the world and to devise what he calls a "democratic development strategy" (ibid., 148), based on a political culture of tolerance and a broad involvement of the people, with the ultimate goal to serve the people.

Democratic development in Africa is about bread and shelter, quinine and ‘kitenge’,¹ schools and clean water, peace and security, better roads and state support for agriculture. It means involving the whole of society in the definition and control of political issues and the political process. It means good governance. (Othman, 2003, 149)

Social work as a human rights profession

The ideas of development, political participation and democracy are linked to the philosophy of and struggle for the realisation of human rights. From its formative years, social work has been deeply rooted in the ideals of human rights and social justice. Internationally, social work is widely recognised as a *human rights profession* (Healy, 2008; Wronka and Staub-Bernasconi, 2012). In the context of East Africa, such a conception of social work is strongly challenged by the reality of widespread human rights violations in the region. Many contributions in this book provide evidence of the denial and abuse of the basic human rights of children, women and men in situations of chronic poverty and deprivation; in contexts of armed conflict and political violence; with regard to their status as a refugee; their belonging to a certain ethnic group; or simply because of their sex. Gender-based violence is a common social phenomenon in virtually all countries of the East African Community (see Daley, 2008; Kasente, 2011). In Tanzania and other parts of Africa, people with albinism are maimed and killed due to cultural beliefs and myths which attribute magical powers to them, and due to the demands of a market for albino body parts believed to bring wealth and fortune (Burke, Kaijage and John-Langba, 2014). In many African countries, older people are no longer respected by the younger generation but discriminated against because of their age and deprived of their basic rights (Spitzer and Mabeyo, 2011). People with a homosexual orientation are confronted with frenetic homophobia, criminalisation of their sexual identity and draconian laws such as the Anti-Homosexuality Bill in Uganda (Epprecht, 2013; Healy and Kamya, 2014). Archbishop Desmond Tutu from South Africa wrote: “Our lesbian and gay brothers and sisters across Africa are living in fear.” (Tutu, 2010) Tutu views discriminatory legislations on homosexual people in several African countries as “terrible backward steps for human rights in Africa” (ibid.). The question is: Where are the social workers who raise their voice for the human rights of these stigmatised and victimised groups? As a prerequisite for the fulfilment of human rights of women, children, people with albinism, homosexuals and other minority groups such as ethnic minorities, social work educators and practitioners have to critically reflect on their own internalised values and norms (like their view on gender roles and sexual orientation) that might restrict them from advocating these population groups who rightly need their voice.

Apart from the political pressure that accompanies many of these human rights violations, social workers have to deal with another challenge leading right to the centre of social work ethics: to find a delicate balance between the profession’s dual commitment to respect cultural diversity, on the one hand, and to advocate human rights, on the other (Healy, 2007). As social change agents and representatives of a human rights profession, they cannot accept cultural practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM), yet, they

¹ Swahili for cloth.

have to face traditional norms and values that fundamentally contradict the very basic principles of their profession. They have to deal with the realities of patriarchal family and community structures and negotiate ways to bring about sustainable change and safeguard the human integrity of the most vulnerable in society. In this regard, humanistic concepts of African ethics such as *ubuntu* and other culturally-grounded philosophies based on respect, tolerance and solidarity can serve as powerful means and guiding principles towards the realisation of human rights. Their essential message is well understood by the local people, and they have both a practical meaning as well as a strong spiritual significance (Spitzer and Twikirize, 2014).

As a consequence, social work students have to critically reflect on the appropriateness of such concepts and should be taught how to incorporate them into their spectrum of interventions. Based on a strong ethical foundation, social work can play a leading role in the achievement of human rights in East Africa and in the broader conflict-ridden Great Lakes region.

Social work as a profession and a discipline

It is now widely recognised in the East African countries that social work is a profession with unique concepts and methods to deal with social problems and other challenges in society. Based on the PROSOWO research findings (Twikirize *et al.*, 2013; Kalinganire and Rutikanga, 2014; Mabeyo, Ndung'u and Riedl, 2014; Wairire *et al.*, 2014; see also the corresponding chapters in this book), the profession has now also gained an empirical baseline upon which further efforts can be built.

First and foremost, PROSOWO contributed to the promotion of social work within the social work profession! Through the intertwined activities of research, curriculum development, publications, workshops, symposia and conferences, and steps towards the formulation of a legislation to regulate the profession, many colleagues have become inspired and motivated to engage with social work research and other activities, bringing back the sense of identity of social work which had been severely eroded in the past. It was also observed that the success and broad impact of the PROSOWO project brought the faculties together, from the students who eventually show much more engagement in and identification with social work up to the top level of universities. At the University of Rwanda, a full department on social work, instead of a social work option under the umbrella of sociology, is now envisaged. In Tanzania, three higher education institutions have started or are in the process of launching new Master of Social Work (MSW) programmes in the near future.² Makerere University in Uganda is equally in the process of developing a MSW programme, heavily informed by the results of the empirical findings of the PROSOWO research. Further empirical research, coupled with context-specific theory construction, enhanced academic output and institutional capacity-building, will also contribute to social work being gradually acknowledged as a fully-fledged academic discipline on its own.

² This applies to the Open University of Dar es Salaam, the Hubert Kairuki Memorial University and the Institute of Social Work.

Efforts must now be put in place to safeguard the gains that this project has been able to achieve so far. There is a need to harness the feelings of comradeship that have been nurtured through the PROSOWO project and work towards sustaining them beyond the project's lifespan. Strong networks within the social work community in the region are now evident. The management of the East African partner institutions should now strongly support further initiatives, for example, an annual social work forum for social work students, practitioners and scholars from the region. The social work conference in Kampala in March 2014 marked a milestone in this regard. Such events serve as an ideal platform for networking and pre-conference gatherings for different national stakeholders to consolidate cross-national relations between social work institutions. A consolidated social work forum can bring all training institutions in the region together (which are 34 at the time of writing this book). It can equally serve as a platform to network and unite the social workers' associations in the region (there are active associations in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda; Burundi has not managed yet to establish a functioning association). With an efficient partnership network amongst the social work training institutions and associations, there is strong potential to generate a powerful social work voice in the region. This is likely to be even more strongly felt if such initiatives and forums are linked to other bodies for social work in Africa, specifically the regional body of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW-Africa region) and the Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa (ASSWA) which can be strengthened on an international level as more schools in Eastern Africa become members of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW). Such enlarged networks at a regional, pan-African and international level will yield better visibility and contribute to a more professionalised state of social work in the greater East African region. As such, social work will become a powerful profession. Ginsberg (2010, 90) called social work "a mammoth occupation", referring to the big number of social workers in the United States of America. When looking at the African continent – although there is nothing like a database or even reliable piecemeal information – one must come to the conclusion that there must be tens of thousands of social work practitioners, students and educators on the continent, who, if they would just get the chance to join hands, have the power to bring about change.

Social work as a key stakeholder in the East African Community³

Efforts for a strong social work community in East Africa with a voice at the East African Community (EAC) should now be prioritised. This will ensure that intra-country and regional policies can be more realistic once the presence of social work is felt in the region. Through this, social workers can be able to address common challenges and issues of concern like the refugee problem, forced displacement and human trafficking. Although social workers are already involved in these humanitarian responses, the major issue is that their efforts may not be attributed to them as professionals and, therefore, they continue to work behind the scenes and receive limited recognition for their contribution. This can limit their level of influence of policies regarding such issues. Social workers can also

³ We thank Gidraph G. Wairire for his valuable inputs on the potential role of social work in the East African Community.

be involved in capacity-building initiatives and programmes undertaken at national level and jointly between Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda to enhance effective border management within the region (EAC, 2011). Equally important to note is that the East African Community has several other sectors where contributions of social workers can have tremendous impact. The sectors include education and culture, environment and natural resources management, health, immigration, infrastructure and industrialisation.⁴

The East African Community (2014) recognises that education and training play a crucial role in enabling a country or region to define its priorities and aspirations. It is a means through which any nation determines the type of human resources which will facilitate social and economic development. Further, the re-established East African Community has a renewed commitment to ensure that the common goals and aspirations of the peoples of East Africa are realised through harmonised curricula. Social work education must not be left out in this process owing to its core mandate of promoting social change and social development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Shared social work academic initiatives between institutions of higher learning in East Africa must now be intensified. Perhaps the best way to start this is to create opportunities for field placement for students in the East African countries and to launch an exchange programme for social work academics in the region. This can then be extended to include other universities outside East Africa for more exposure to international social work. Likewise, national social work associations should be encouraged to network with their colleagues within the EAC in order to enhance their influence in regional policies and developments.

Towards social development, poverty reduction and gender equality

One of the most evident outcomes of the PROSOWO research is that social work in East Africa has first and foremost to deal with the manifold manifestations of poverty, social exclusion and social inequality. According to Thorbecke (2012), sub-Saharan Africa is a region where the proportion of the poor has not declined between 1981 and 2005 and where the absolute number of poor people actually increased significantly. Despite impressive economic growth rates in the East African Community with an average of 6% growth in 2011 (SID, 2013), high levels of absolute and chronic poverty persist. According to the 2013 progress report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Africa (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa *et al.*, 2013), the sub-Saharan region is largely off-track and will not reach most of the MDGs. Mukandala, Fox and Liebenenthal (2006, 34) provide the following rationale for the gap between economic growth and poverty reduction:

First, evidence shows that good macro-economic indicators [such as economic growth] take time to translate into jobs, higher incomes, and improved standards of living at the grassroots level. Second, although economic growth is necessary for poverty reduction, it is not sufficient.

⁴ See <http://www.eac.int/>.

Traditionally, social work in East Africa is mainly preoccupied with the symptoms of poverty, social inequality and social exclusion rather than finding avenues to play a part in tackling their root causes. While it is noble and absolutely necessary to assist impoverished and deprived people at a micro level, it is equally important to raise one's attention to the macro level and to take a stand on social and development policies, including strategies to empower women and create gender equality on a broad societal level. This is probably the major future challenge for social work in East Africa: to transcend the micro-macro divide and re-conceptualise its professional mandate towards both grassroots interventions as well as macro policies. While social work professionals have to remain sceptical towards an uncritical adoption of the paradigm of neoliberal capitalism and its concomitant hope for a trickle-down effect that macro-economic investments will sooner or later reach the majority of the poor population, they must at the same time seek for tangible possibilities to influence these very macro policies towards the realisation of an alternative paradigm rooted in values of social justice, social inclusion and social equality. In this regard, Mukandala, Fox and Liebenthal (2006, 35) speak of "pro-poor political visions", a term which social workers may find adoptable. The words of the late Nelson Mandela might serve as a guiding principle here: "Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life. While poverty persists, there is no true freedom." (Mandela, 2005)

The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development, a far-reaching document jointly published by the International Association of Schools of Social Work, the International Council on Social Welfare and the International Federation of Social Workers (IASSW, ICSW and IFSW, 2012), provides a conceptual framework for social work action to make a stronger contribution to policy development (Jones and Truell, 2012). The Global Agenda features four priority areas: social and economic equality within countries and between regions; dignity and worth of the person; environmental sustainability; and importance of human relationships (IASSW, ICSW and IFSW, 2012).⁵ While some regions have already started to articulate their social work objectives based on this document (Jones and Truell, 2012), the Global Agenda has not gained recognition yet in the social work discourse in East Africa. Nevertheless, it is a suitable document to serve as a blueprint and guideline for policy interventions and to back arguments and actions of social work stakeholders, particularly in contexts which are highly complex and difficult as is the case in the East African region.

Although all four priority areas of the Global Agenda are of equal importance and interlinked with each other, one aspect is highlighted here: environmental sustainability. A lot has been written on the negative impact of climate change and global warming, but nowhere else on this globe will the link between social development, poverty reduction, human rights and environmental protection become more evident than in Africa. As stated by Maathai (2009), climate change will bring massive ecological and economic challenges. Poor people living in both rural and urban areas are the ones who suffer most from environmental pollution, destruction of the natural habitat, deforestation,

⁵ See also <http://www.globalsocialagenda.org/>.

desertification, soil erosion, unreliable rainfalls, draught and flooding, and other effects on already overburdened ecosystems. Although goal number seven of the MDGs explicitly refers to environmental sustainability, it has never received sufficient attention, yet, it is the most important one since “[w]hat happens to the ecosystem affects everything else” (Maathai, 2009, 240). As a consequence, development practices must be conceived and implemented holistically (ibid., 20), and so must social work practice and policy interventions. According to Peeters (2012), ecological questions do not seem to concern the social dimension, and despite social work’s ecosystems thinking, a biophysical perspective is almost non-existent in mainstream social work practice.

A perspective that explicitly links social work and the environment and could complement and enrich the social developmental perspective of social work in African contexts can be found in Dominelli’s (2012) approach of “green social work”. In the sense of this approach, the social and physical environments are interrelated and interact with and impact upon each other.

I argue that green social work focuses on how responses to environmental crises must both challenge and address poverty, structural inequalities, socioeconomic disparities, industrialization processes, consumption patterns, diverse contexts, global interdependencies and limited natural resources. (Dominelli, 2012, 3)

A synopsis of “environmental and social justice” (Dominelli, 2012, 6) not only provides a link to poverty reduction, but also strongly pertains to issues of gender equality since African women remain at the centre of rural farming and rural life, which are mostly affected by the adverse effects of environmental degradation.

Maathai (2009) refers to the symbol of a traditional African stool to explain her notion of a holistic concept of sustainable development. The traditional stool is comprised of a seat and three legs. The first leg represents robust democratic principles and respect for human rights and the environment, the second leg stands for sustainable and accountable management and equitable distribution of resources, and the third leg refers to strong cultures of peace which take the form of fairness, respect, compassion, forgiveness, recompense and justice.

Just as the African stool is made out of a single block of wood, each leg, or pillar, is reinforced by the others and formed from the same grain, so the issues must be addressed together and simultaneously. (Maathai, 2009, 57)

The three-legged stool supports the seat which represents the milieu in which development can take place.

Having a stable stool means ensuring that a holistic approach to development is adopted, placing a priority on democratic governance and respect for human and other rights; equitable, sustainable, and accountable use of all resources; and managing affairs of state in an accountable and responsible way. When all these facets are in place, the stool is secure, the state has stability, and peace and development can occur. (Maathai, 2009, 58)

Maathai stresses that citizens’ engagement and an active civil society are crucial elements, otherwise the stool can neither be created nor strengthened. Here lies the role of social workers: to play a pro-active and dynamic role in the development processes of their

countries towards a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable future. Nelson Mandela once said: "As long as poverty, injustice and gross inequality persist in our world, none of us can truly rest." (Mandela, 2005) This essentially applies to social work. If the profession shows the will and the required skills, it will have its right share towards social development, poverty reduction and gender equality in East Africa and beyond.

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Prevalent poverty and related problems in the East African region call for substantial action from various stakeholders, including social workers. This book, based on comprehensive empirical research, portrays an emerging yet powerful profession that has a significant role to play in the endeavour towards social development, social justice, human rights and gender equality. The book is the first of its kind to provide first-hand theoretical and empirical evidence about social work in East Africa.

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